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MODERN CHARACTERISTICS.

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MODERN CHARACTERISTICS.

A SERIES OF SHORT ESSAYS

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NOTE.

It is obvious that none of the following short Essays can pretend to be anything more than suggestive. If they have any value, it must be of this kind. Should they fortunately possess the quality of suggestiveness, they will, perhaps, be more useful and more agreeable to the reader than if they were so many systematic moral and social treatises.

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MODERN CHARACTERISTICS.

I.

FALSE STEPS.

IT would be very interesting to know how many even sensible men over forty are free from a conviction that, at some point in the journey of their lives, they have taken a wrong turning, and in how many cases the grounds of self-reproach would be found to be quite baseless. People often are fond of attributing to a false step a want of success that is really due to incapacity. A man persuades himself, for instance, that he might have been at the head of his profession if he had only adopted some other course than the one he actually followed at a certain stage in his career, when the truth is that whatever course he had adopted, he could never

have risen beyond the level of mediocrity. The reflection soothes his vanity and restores his self-esteem. For, although the fact of having taken a wrong turning indicates in itself a deficiency of judgment, still everybody is ready to pardon himself for a weakness which he thinks is only temporary. To be able to trace the failure of a life to a single blunder permits one to believe that, on all other occasions, everything has been done to ensure success that mortal could do. We are naturally very lenient to ourselves if we can think that we have not lost our way more than once or twice, and that afterwards no pains or discretion have been spared in endeavouring to recover the lost ground. Ill-fortune bears the blame for all the rest. We did wrong, it is true; but then, if luck had not been incorrigibly hostile, the error would speedily have been repaired, and all would have gone on well. And, after a certain time, a man gets into the way of looking back even upon the false step to which he pleads guilty, as something for which he was not altogether responsible. Just as people can go on telling an untrue story until they believe it to be true, they can in the same way go on ascribing all their ills to some one mistake, until at last they begin to forget that the mistake was their own, and to talk of it as they might be expected to talk of a blight that had descended upon them

from the clouds. One sometimes hears men say that their obscurity and failure would have been exchanged for the most splendid distinction if they had only got a first-class and a fellowship at the University. At first, they deplore the indolence or want of ambition which prevented them from working their way to the required position. But, by the time they have reached middle life, the matter assumes quite a different aspect, and the missing fellowship which would have set them securely in the path of renown, is thought about as a gift which the grudging gods had deliberately withheld from a deserving mortal. It is surprising how the lapse of time assists us in the pleasant process of divesting ourselves, as it were, of our own conduct. As years go by, we can acquire an amazing knack of looking upon past errors as things quite extraneous to our own individuality. The false step appears like some hereditary misfortune for which we are to be pitied rather than blamed, and which should be spoken of tenderly, as we should speak of the fault of another. It may be surmised that the scourging enjoined by a father confessor is very lightly administered to himself by the penitent sinner, and, like the pilgrim who took the precaution of boiling the peas before placing them in his shoes, people of the most self-accusing turn of mind soon get the wonderfully convenient faculty

of softening down their blunders before they lay much stress upon the dismal consequences which have ensued from them.

It is in provincial towns that you find the most liberal burdens laid upon the single blunder, the one false step. Everybody, we suppose, whom it has pleased God to condemn to live in such places, looks upon his fate as more or less hard. Or, at all events, most of the conceited people who live in the country are given to fancy that they have missed their mark because they have never emerged from the obscurity of local success into the daylight of metropolitan fame. They never doubt their capacity to achieve the very loftiest distinctions in the arena where competition is most active, and where their rivals would be the ablest men in the kingdom. A person, with a local reputation as a doctor, or a preacher, or even a mayor, will tell a visitor with mourning complacency that the one mistake in his career has been that he did not in early life seek his fortune in the great centre. Compliments on his eminent position, on his merited popularity, on the confidence with which he is regarded by his esteemed townsmen, only serve to make his regrets more poignant, as well as more profusely expressed, that his merits have not had a worthier field. If he had only done this or that, which he has not done, perhaps he might have deserved the compliments which you

are so kind as to pay him. The local doctor is quite sure that, if he had only been plucky enough to face the temporary difficulties which the London beginner has to encounter, he would by this time have been driving about Belgravia in a carriage and pair, and pocketing thousands of guineas per annum. He can always name the exact date at which he ought to have made the decisive move, and can point out with precision the reasons which prevented him from taking at its flood the tide in his affairs which would have led on to fortune. The popular parson of a provincial town generally repines, with equal bitterness, because he was such a fool in his younger days as not to feel a spiritual call to the great Babylon where Cabinet Ministers are supposed to listen to sermons and to select favourite pastors to fill up bishoprics. If he had only turned to the right instead of to the left, he might by this time have been Primate of all England. The false step, as he thinks it, has cost him the fame to which his powers entitle him, and left him stranded among the shallows of provincial glory and a too moderate income.

Then again, a great many persons look upon their choice of a calling as the initial blunder of their lives. One man thinks that, if he had been a barrister instead of a doctor, he would have been certain of the highest success; another is

equally sure that the stage or the pulpit is the only career in which his brilliant natural talents would have had fair play. And no doubt it is very true that men choose their professions, or have their professions chosen for them, without much regard to special aptitudes. But, in the majority of cases, there is no special aptitude which it would be worth while to consult. Most people would probably make just as good cobblers as tailors, just as efficient lawyers as doctors, just as persuasive parsons as members of Parliament. What they take for a false step is nothing of the kind, only it is consolatory to their vanity to think otherwise. There are men whose genius only lies in one direction, and, unless room is provided for its expansion in that direction, there is a pure waste of force. As a rule, however, the same qualities which make a man fail in one calling would cause him to fail, whatever calling he followed, and there is no reason to doubt the soundness of the old precept, *Optimum elige, suave et facile illud faciet consuetudo.* Of course the choice is sometimes not the wisest nor the most advantageous that could have been made. Still, even then, the error need not be classed among those fatally critical proceedings which make all the difference between a prosperous and a miserable life. There is perhaps one calling which deserves to be considered an exception. A man

who has gone into orders, and found out afterwards that convictions and sentiments of all sorts are growing up in his mind which expose him to a peculiarly penetrating kind of obloquy from those around him, as well as unfit him for the effective and conscientious discharge of his duties, may well look back upon the day of his ordination as the point where he took the wrong turn. This, in such a case, is a genuine false step, and the person who has been so unfortunate as to take it may have to flounder about for the rest of his days among all manner of obstacles, and impediments, and general wretchedness. The better the quality of his mind, and the more honourably sensitive his conscience, the clearer is his perception of the blunder, and therefore the greater is the blunder itself.

It is a rather striking circumstance that the matter in which men and women most commonly take a serious false step is that which is least readily acknowledged. Probably about the most fatal blunder that anybody can perpetrate is a bad marriage; and, moreover, of all blunders this is the commonest. It is also one which the parties to it most carefully conceal from themselves. The reluctance which people feel to recognise, even in their own minds, an irreparable mistake such as this, is a measure of the sincerity with which they are willing to attribute ill-fortune to their mis-

takes in other pieces of conduct. Certainly, nobody can blame them for making the best of what is irretrievable. If a man finds that his wife is shamefully extravagant, or a great fool, or a shrew, he may be more than pardoned for trying not to see what a fearful burden he has been at the trouble to tie round his neck. And when a woman finds that her husband is a tyrant, or intolerably self-opinionated, or openly indifferent to her, she is right in making the best of her bargain. Where a real false step has been taken, everybody does all he can to make it as little mischievous as may be. When people are found bemoaning some one blunder as the cause of all their ills, instead of leaving the blunder to itself, we may be pretty sure either that they do not mean what they say, or else that their ills have been the natural results, not of one false step, but of a confirmed habit of mental staggering and stumbling. It is not so easy for a man to ruin his life by a single act. Marriage, however, is the most decisive and the easiest of such acts, if we may also include under the term those clandestine connections which can only be described negatively as *not* marriages. The man who marries without knowing more than the mere surface of his wife's character, or without having carefully counted the cost of bringing up a family, takes almost the one step in ordinary life which there is no power of

retracing, and which may lead him hopelessly away from the kind and amount of success which he might otherwise have reached. The formation of those other unions to which Belgravian mothers profess their strong objections, apart from the moral aspect of such conduct, involves a set of obligations, real or fancied, the discharge of which may well fetter a man for the remainder of his life.

The more common secret of want of success in life is a general tendency to let things drift. It is not so much the missing one opportunity, or the committing one blunder, as the lavish waste of all the forces and opportunities which in various shapes come within the grasp. The temper which permits such waste of a material that is never replaced may spring from indolence, or absence of ambition, or an intellectual incapacity of discerning what an opportunity or a force means. Plenty of men fail for all these reasons. But a still larger number fail for lack of a quality which is neither industry merely, nor acuteness, nor an eager desire to get on, but a kind of vigilant tenacity, like that of the hunter after his prey. Such men break down in the race, or at least never get beyond a very humble goal, less because they have been tripped up by a stone or fallen into some unsuspected trench, than because they were comparatively destitute of vigour and concentration. They are morally halt and maimed to begin with. They

have not the stamina which supports men under heavy weights, and carries them well over a prolonged course. They can look seriously at the obstacles which are immediately in front of them, and can overcome them without difficulty, but they never think of the obstacles that lie a little way ahead, or at all events rather make preparations for shirking than for getting the better of them. Most men suffer much fewer and less damaging injuries from the actual false steps they take, than from that timorous or incapable temper which makes them shamble slipshod through life, not knowing clearly whither they want to go, or how they are ever to get anywhere at all; contented or discontented with little, but in either case equally incompetent to make that little greater. It is the slovenliness of men and women which for the most part makes their lives so unsatisfactory. They do not sit at the loom with keen eye and deft finger, but they work listlessly, and without a sedulous care to piece together as they best may the broken threads. We are apt to give up work too soon, to suppose that a single breakage has ruined the cloth. The men who get on in the world are not daunted by one nor a thousand breakages.

II.

THE USES OF DIGNITY.

IT was stated in the newspapers the other day that, at an important town on one of the circuits, the two learned judges were conveyed to church, to hear the assize sermon, in a very shabby old brougham drawn by a pair of very weedy horses. Not unnaturally, this extraordinary simplicity excited a good deal of remark. The reporter calls it Spartan simplicity, though one does not quite perceive what the Spartans had to do with shabby broughams and bad hacks. But, whether we choose to consider such an incident as an exhibition of Spartan simplicity or of county stinginess, it is equally suggestive of one or two rather remarkable undercurrents in modern English society. There are various causes at work to make people pay less attention and attach less

value to what are beginning to be spoken of, not without a shade of contempt, as the outsides of things. For various reasons, we are becoming disposed to look more and more entirely to results, without thinking much of the gracefulness or dignity or any other minor quality of the means which lead to the results. So long as the work is performed—and in work may be justly included a large share of what, by a distinction without a difference, is classified as pleasure—we are every day getting more indifferent to details that are not essential. If offenders are tried and punished with justice and despatch, of what possible consequence can it be whether the judges went to church in a rickety old brougham or Hansom cab, or in a bran new state-coach? If you can eat your dinner as heartily and digest it as comfortably in a flannel shooting-jacket, why should you take the trouble to change it for a dress-coat? So far as it goes, this mode of argument cannot be impugned, only there is no reason why it should not be carried a great deal further. The judge's knowledge of law would not be a whit diminished, nor his sagacity and penetration any less active, if he sat in his shirt-sleeves in a rocking-chair. If it is desirable that everybody should on all occasions wear exactly whatever costume he finds most comfortable, it is hard to see why in summer he should not go out to dinner in the severely simple

and unostentatious apparel of the Sandwich Islanders. And perhaps we ought, on the same principle, to act on the doctrine of Diogenes, that whatever is not in itself improper ought to be performed publicly—which, it is evident, would bring about an uncommonly alarming state of things.

There are two sorts of people who encourage a tendency in this direction. First, there are the busy people, daily growing more numerous and more influential, who buy and sell, manufacture, and employ thousands of hands, and make hundreds of thousands of pounds. They find that they can do all this to the best advantage when they are least studious of accessories. His business thrives most who goes straightest and quickest to the point. Briskness and outspeaking and brevity are virtues which go a long way in buying and selling, and making railways, and building bridges, and the like. A man who has habitually to deal with shrewd and vigilant competitors gets a knack of looking down on the little graces and dignities, which, as he thinks, do not, after all, come to anything. Such amenities neither bring money nor add to that bodily ease and enjoyment which form the next most desirable thing in their esteem.

In the second place, among the despisers of dignity are those who take what they think the philosophic view of things. The Transcendentalist and the Stoic both have this point of contact with

those whom in other points they least resemble—the men who find their complete law and gospel in the philosophy of self-help. One who insists on measuring the whole structure of usage and etiquette by a tiny handful of rigid first principles, or who is always crying out about Fact and Veracity, is sure to despise all outsides, and to deem any attention to them the mark of a pedant or a fop. What is the use, he would say, of troubling yourself about the husk, so long as you have the kernel? If a man has Insight and Veracity, and all the other unspeakable virtues so familiar on the lips of the Transcendentalist, he can well dispense with the mere wrappages and hulls, and indulge in whatever whimsicalities of manner and attire and practice seem good in his own eyes. Not very far removed from this way of looking at life is the spirit of asceticism which is a natural product of an age like our own, when the rapid and enormous growth of wealth has been the means both of stimulating and gratifying a corresponding spread of luxurious and self-indulgent habits. The prevalence of luxury and refinement is sure to beget a reaction in that considerable class of minds which are in one age the seed-ground of Stoicism, in another of Puritanism, in a third of Asceticism. In the present day, among some of the rising generation, there is a strong sentiment of dislike for the luxuries, the hope of

attaining which is to so many men the strongest motive to exertion that they are capable of knowing or feeling. Fine houses and gardens, and choice wines and dishes, and horses and carriages, they regard with something like aversion, or at least without the shadow of a desire to possess such things for their own. Of course it would be absurd to expect this temper to be very common; but those whom it influences are sufficiently numerous, along with the other sets of people who habitually protest against regard being had to anything but what is essential and narrowly to the point, to make it worth while to dwell on one or two of the considerations on the other side which they are apt to overlook.

Life without these secondary adjuncts of grace and dignity is like one of those plain gaunt houses which are often eminently commodious and healthy, but which still have no claim to be considered types of the most perfect domestic architecture. A great many people much prefer these bleak mansions, and fit them up inside in a style of corresponding severity. One can live in them very well, it cannot be denied: one's food may taste as agreeably and prove as nutritious, and one's sleep may be as sound, and one can do as much work there as anywhere else, perhaps. And just in the same way, a man can get some pleasure and do a great deal of work, if he is wholly

indifferent to the ornamentation of his life. But the question is whether this adornment is not, after all, worth something for its own sake, and whether it is not an end for which even large sacrifices may advantageously be made. Is attention to the outside, to the husk, to be fairly treated as a waste of time? Style, for instance, and demeanour, and attire, are all mere outsides. If a man's thoughts are worth listening to, it is quite immaterial, we are told, into what form of words he chooses to throw them, provided they are thoroughly intelligible. If his heart is in the right place, and he leads a virtuous life, and pursues wisdom, he is no worse if he is as shy or uncouth as a Troglodyte. If he is industrious and clever, it does not much matter whether he dresses well or ill. Nobody of sense, we suppose, would deny either that graces of the mind and dignity of character are a great deal more important than graces and dignity of exterior, or that the one set of qualities may exist without the other. A man may write polished and sonorous sentences which have not an atom of thought in them. He may have dignity of behaviour, and yet be either a great fool or a great rogue, or both one and the other. And he may be well dressed, without necessarily possessing either a sound mind or a sound body. All this is obvious—as obvious as it is, on the other hand, that a man like Samuel Johnson

may have both dignity of character and of style without any exterior graces, or that a writer like Mr. Carlyle may be perfectly capable of appreciating and sympathizing with grace of mind and dignity of character, and may still descend to the outrageous ugliness of his "Doggeries" and "Gigmanities." It is probably from observing merely that there is no radical connection between dignity in small matters, and genuine worth and power in those weightier matters which make the base of our esteem for one another, that so many people have failed to recognise the existence of dignity in non-essentials as a substantial and independent merit, or even have come to regard it as a downright littleness.

It is natural that an esteem for the decorations of life should be a late growth of our civilization, and that their value should not strike the large section of educated people who, though they do not think of Rousseau or Bernardin St. Pierre, always sigh for some ideal of primitive simplicity, where no cumbrous etiquette, no considerations of outside appearance, should fetter the free intercourse of man and man, and hinder each from living his own life. Like young lovers, we are, for a short period in our early days at all events, eager to believe that the happiest life is that which is occupied with fewest interests, and which is least dependent on anything outside of our-

selves. Time and thought succeed in convincing most persons that it would be considerably nearer the truth to look upon the best kind of happiness as lying in the widest possible range of interests and tastes, and as belonging to him who, by opportunity and culture, is able to add to sterling worth and sound practical judgment the keenest appreciation of all minor pleasures, and the nicest attention to all minor adornments. Simplicity is very often only a pleasant name for shabbiness or squalor, and dignified simplicity is a fine way of talking about shabbiness and conceit combined. But at best simplicity, as applied to manner of life, is a negative virtue. There are a great many circumstances in which it is highly laudable, because it means a proper thriftiness and frugality. People who affect minor pleasures and adornments when they cannot afford to pay for them, or when they can only gratify their tastes at the expense of more solid objects—as, for instance, the education of their children—are clearly guilty of a heavy social offence. Still, even in the cases where simplicity of life is most becoming and most admirable, it is in itself only a doing without certain things. The contented endurance of this privation may indicate strength and common sense, but the man would have extracted more out of life if the privation had not been necessary, and if he had been capable both of feeling and of gratify-

ing a larger number of sensibilities. The power of being able to endure with contentment, when it is necessary, the lack of all decoration, is a very valuable one; but the necessity of exercising the power is in itself almost always a sheer drawback. A man may deserve all praise for foregoing every superfluous adornment; but the circumstances which make such conduct praiseworthy are, so far as they go, justly to be deplored. To be obliged to live in dingy rooms, and to have no pictures nor flowers nor music, and to fare coarsely, and wear bad clothes—all this is a deprivation which the most philosophic of men would be all the better for not having to undergo. If it be endured for the sake of discharging some unquestioned duty, the man has an entirely ample compensation. If he goes through it simply because he is unconscious of all that he has missed, or indifferent to what he might have legitimately enjoyed, then by so much has he lessened the dignity of his life. It has been by precisely so much less worth having than it might have been.

Of course a love of dignity—unfortunately, like every other excellent sentiment—may err in excess as well as in deficiency. A man may carry it so far in art and letters as to become a mere fastidious dilettante, and nothing more. On another side it may degenerate into stupid foppery. In a third aspect it may grow into a hateful and thick-ribbed

priggishness. Attention to niceties of manner and expression, and to the ornamental part of all that we surround ourselves with, is capable of absorbing more than a fair share of the mind, and of diverting us from what is much more valuable than any niceties can ever be. But at the present time the common tendency is strongly in the other direction. A miserable and gratuitous misconception of what the rising school of philosophers have so unfortunately named Utility gives an unwarranted encouragement to the tendency. As if every ornament and grace of conduct and manner, and even of material surrounding, were not useful in the very highest sense! Industry and energy and temperance and a sense of justice, and the other fundamental virtues of a well-developed character, come first. All these things we ought to do, yet not leave the other undone.

III.

QUARRELS.

THE man who has gone through the world without having once quarrelled with a friend, if, indeed, such a man anywhere exists, might at the first glance appear a fit person both to admire and to envy. Quarrelling with one's friends is a process at once so painful and so profitless that anybody who has contrived to escape it may be considered to have escaped one of the most troublesome drawbacks of life. But it is worth remembering that a man who has never had a quarrel has probably never had a friend. The only person who manages to get on without estrangements, lasting or temporary, is one who can be quite content without attachments. There are some people, it is true, of whom it may be said, in the well-known phrase, that they have a genius for friendship; but even this is no

guarantee for a peaceful life. In one sense, there is truth in the saying that it takes two to make a quarrel; but then, if Orestes resolves to estrange himself from Pylades, why Pylades has no means of preventing an alienation in which he actually has no part. Even the warmest and most considerate of men, those who possess most of the genius of friendship, are thus in a manner at the mercy of those with whom they are thrown, by circumstances or an unwise choice, into close intercourse. The fatal law, that the side on which we are most susceptible of pleasure is also that on which we may have inflicted on us the deepest pain, applies as well to friendship as to all other occasions of emotion. The amount of delight a man can take in the affection and geniality of a friend is always the exact measure of the grief he has to endure when the affection gradually burns lower and lower, and finally flickers out among the grey ashes. Whether, however, quarrels are an inevitable source of distress to everybody who is capable of friendship, or whether one could steer altogether clear of them by tact, and temper, and forbearance, the fact that, as things are, quarrels and estrangements do fill up a certain and not inconsiderable space in life is unfortunately beyond dispute.

The curious and mortifying thing about such quarrels is that, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, they seem to rise out of mistakes, and to

be, what they are sometimes euphemistically called, simple misunderstandings, which only require explanations to dissolve them into space. Of course people quarrel about money, and bargains, and agreements of all kinds. The refusal of a loan of money, or an obstinate and uncompromising adherence to his own interpretation of an ambiguous agreement, may be quite enough to separate a man of a certain temperament from an old friend to whom he is on the whole disinterestedly attached. Another, who would never think of quarrelling with a friend because he was stingy and ungenerous, or because he had a weakness for invariably thinking himself in the right about matters of fact and so on, may be full of speculative intolerance, and perhaps would not scruple to cut off his best friend for avowing a doctrine or a principle of which he did not approve. Then men quarrel about women, just as women quarrel about men. The strongest friendship can scarcely outlive the conviction that you and your friend both are desperately in love with the same person. In novels, indeed, the rejected suitor sometimes preserves his attachment to the bosom friend who has ingeniously cut him out, but in real life he ceases to be closely intimate with the successful rival. Women in this respect are perhaps less sensitive than men, or is it that they are better dissemblers? But the disturbances that arise from

all these sources are by no means the most vexatious. Their origin is intelligible, and more or less removable. If Damon is sulky because Pythias will not lend him a sum at a pinch, or will not pay him back what he borrowed, the shock can only be fatal where the friendship was already trembling and uncertain for other reasons. "Loan oft loseth both itself and friend," but only where the latter was rather an acquaintance than anything nearer. Two men, again, who quarrel because they think differently about the origin of evil, or because one is partial to *Essays and Reviews* and the other to *Aids to Faith*, or because one holds that the differences of species are due to natural selection while the other insists on attributing them to distinct acts of creation, probably have done the wisest thing they could. People of this temper ought to be left to themselves, each undisturbed in his own little fool's paradise. Wiser men will admit that a friend may be worth knowing, and liking, and keeping, in spite of what may appear the most frightfully wrongheaded views on half the controversies of the day. Whether the very highest form of friendship is perfect without the closest intellectual sympathy—and this does not at all necessarily involve complete identity of opinion—may be disputed. But most men are not capable of the very highest kind, and in ordinary life two people can like one another

very much, and derive the greatest pleasure from frequent intercourse, and be quite ready to make sacrifices for one another, without there being anything to hinder them from thinking altogether differently about politics, and philosophy, and religion. And in the case where men quarrel for a mistress, or women for a lover, the wound in ordinary natures does not go so very deep, unless indeed there has been some downright treachery and foul play. Men and women now-a-days do not often nurse the flame of a passion that has become hopeless. They are like the tender-hearted being in one of Chamfort's anecdotes, whom her lover had forsaken. "I expected to find you plunged in misery and desolation," said a friend who came in and discovered her playing the harp. "Ah, mon Dieu," she exclaimed in pathetic tones, "c'était hier qu'il fallait me voir."

But the most mortifying quarrels that a third person has to look upon are those which, as we have said, are sheer half-deliberate misunderstandings. Of all the many ingenious devices to which men and women have resorted for the purpose of inflicting torment upon themselves, this is the most unfailing — to encourage an estrangement with somebody for whom at bottom they have a sincere affection or liking. Gratuitous perversity of this kind would seem incredible but for the frequency with which, even in ordinary life,

instances of it are to be discovered. We are not talking about the *iræ amantium.* Young ladies and their lovers quarrel, just as children quarrel. Occasional wrangling is an inseparable incident of their position, and for various plain reasons. They have often a good deal of spare time, after they have gone through the repetition of the lover's catechism, and they do not know how to fill it up. Then, as is well known, the *redintegratio amoris*, the making up again, is in itself so sweet as to be worth a quarrel, if there were nothing else to be got by it. But why do grown-up people encourage even temporary estrangements? They at least ought to have something better to do with their time. With them the reconciliation is much more difficult to bring about, and much less complete when it is brought about. The silver link may be reunited, but the chain is irreparably weakened, except in the rare cases where natural sympathy between the two is so strong and irresistible as to overwhelm with a rush every lurking consciousness of a grievance. Even men who know the folly of encouraging or even allowing a root of bitterness to grow up between themselves and people whom they really like, just as it were out of sheer caprice, give way unresistingly to such perverse possessions. The grievance begins, they scarcely know how, or they scarcely take the trouble to learn. Damon thinks that Pythias neglects him,

or means to snub him; or else he thinks that Pythias does not treat somebody else as he ought, and they split upon the perilous rock of friends' friends; or perhaps their wives, if they have wives, do not love one another as they should do. The most trifling thing is enough to breed a kind of vague uncomfortable feeling, which, waxing daily more and more grievous, and fostered on all manner of real or imaginary disgusts, at length ends in thorough alienation. An intolerable raw has been satisfactorily established, which produces smarts and twinges and wincings for months and years after. And a friendship that has perished in this way scarcely ever comes to life again. A friend lost by excessive heat may easily be restored, but if you have lost him by an excessive coolness of slow and seemingly inexplicable growth, the chances are strong against a renewal of the old liking. This reflection alone might make men more careful than they are about opening the tiniest hole to a feeling of aggrievedness. It is the letting out of waters which may probably never be gathered in again. Considering how much a solid and sincere friendship is worth to a man—and the advantages and delights of friendship have been the commonplace of moralists from Cicero down to Tupper—there is something wonderful in the recklessness with which men surrender themselves to that morbid unmanly state of mind

which is so destructive of frank and enjoyable intimacies.

Sentimental quarrels of this sort—that is, estrangements which inscrutably grow up first in the mind, pretexts for them being easily discovered outside—are the certain symptom of a flaw somewhere. They may show that a man was so weak as to allow himself to become the friend of one whose moral measure he had never been at the pains to take, in the same way as foolish men marry women whom they know little or nothing about. Or else he may have suffered his mind to be prejudiced by the representations, and his conduct biassed by the undeclared but perceptible little antipathies, of those of his own household. Or he may have one of those restless and capricious tempers which never permit the person of whom they have gained possession to know what tranquil confidence and an equable course of life mean. Or he may be the victim of jealousy, and may constantly suspect that his friend abuses him behind his back, and likes somebody else much better. And, whatever may be the immediate cause in a man who is constantly letting coolnesses spring up between himself and his friends, we may be sure that in the long run such a disposition is due to an utter lack of magnanimity. Quarrels and separations no man can wholly escape from, but those gratuitous and perverse quarrels which

gradually spring out of space to torment sensible people are impossible to two men who take a wide view of things. A magnanimous man will not be above remonstrating in the proper spirit with a cooling friend. He will point out the danger that is ahead, and seek by frank and kindly warning to avert it. But this must be done before the victim of his own littleness has got too deeply soured. Even then, there are some intractable beings on whose petulance and inveterate wrong-headedness no amount of good-will makes the least impression. But then such people are not worth having for friends. The sooner one cuts asunder these uncongenial spirits the better. If a friendship is really worth preserving, it is astonishing how soon even the most restive are soothed by the frankness of a large-minded man. Gray, who was not inexperienced in such things, said he was quite sure that, "if ever two people that love one another come to breaking, it is for want of a timely *éclaircissement*—a full and precise one—without witnesses or mediators, and without one disagreeable circumstance for the mind to brood upon in silence."

It does not follow that the clearing up should take place too soon. These misunderstandings are like unwholesome tumours, which are best removed after they have had time to come to a head. If the operation is cleverly and thoroughly performed,

perhaps the friendship may be stronger than ever. But in any case such affairs are a waste of the sweets of life, scanty enough at their best. A wise man takes care not to be too exacting towards his friends, nor to expect more from friendship than either that or anything else can give. Unluckily, too many men are like girls of seventeen, who permit no medium between downright enmity and a gushing unreserve which is only possible so long as people have nothing that can by any means be kept back.

IV.

SOCIAL SALAMANDERS.

CONSIDERING the amount of annoyance and misery which, in some shape or other, everybody has to go through in his passage through life, it would obviously be a great thing if we could discover the secret of those most remarkable people who seem to pass through the fiery furnace of mortification or disgrace without suffering a pang. The man of ordinary sensibility may endure his troubles, great and small, with fortitude or resignation, but still they affect him in a very perceptible fashion. To have his name and his private affairs dragged before the public, or to be humiliated in society by the bad conduct of his relations, or to fail in his business, fills him with a vexation which he scarcely cares to conceal. But there are plenty of people who appear thoroughly impervious to all

feelings of this sort. Like Shadrach and Meshach, they are protected by a mysterious force against the usual effects of the heated furnace. When they come out, we can plainly see that on their bodies the fire has no power, nor is a hair of their heads singed, nor are their coats changed, nor has the smell of fire passed on them. Instead of courting retirement, they seek as much society as they can get. Instead of covering up their humiliations or misconduct, they treat it all as something quite in the ordinary course of things, and ingeniously solace themselves by viewing their own deliberate folly or wickedness as naturally incidental to the common lot of mortal man. The advantages of possessing a temperament of this kind are too plain to need enumeration. Such a disposition is only one instance of the many beneficent provisions for tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. The young lady, for instance, who finds too late that men betray, and thinks the only art to soothe her melancholy is to bring an action for breach of promise, would, one might suppose, be the most miserable of women but for this exceptional gift of resisting all uncomfortable influences. Most young ladies would endure any amount of horrible suffering in another way rather than drag the faithless lover and their own lacerated feelings before a judge and jury. But of course we all know that there are beings in whose

eyes scruples of this sort are only the mark of a very poor creature. They have not the slightest objection in the world to hear a middle-aged counsel read out the once-prized love-letters amid the roars of a crowded and convivially-minded court. They can sit by and, for form's sake shedding a sentimental tear or two under a veil, listen with complacency to the evidence as to the number of kisses and squeezings of the hand which went on, and to prosaic narratives of the lover-like speeches which the defendant had been such a fool as to make in the presence of a cloud of witnesses. The prospect of having to go through such an ordeal would positively turn an ordinary girl's hair white in a single night. But then the ordinary girl is not morally pachydermatous. She is very often, it must be admitted, uncommonly dull and stupid and silly, but the dullest and stupidest may be the most sensitive about exposure and humiliation. Still, let us humbly envy their more fortunate sisters who do not at all shudder at the notion of being the town's talk, or of being the heroine of sensation leading articles, or of getting two or three thousand pounds out of an old lover.

Then there are men, too, naturally endowed with a similar gift. Their souls are so constituted that the sharpest iron seems powerless to enter into them. Overwhelm them with ever so much

ridicule or contempt or detestation, and they rise to the surface again as cheerful and undaunted as ever. They do not value social condemnation or any other form of public opinion at a pin's fee. Instances of such persons abound even among the classes where the force of public opinion is in a general way most keenly felt. Men of rank and station may be found as defiant of the censure of respectable people, as rebellious against the graver prescriptions of the social code, as if they had been born and bred among costermongers. We may occasionally fall in even with a great dignitary in Church or State who can face with composure a popular storm that would drive most men to cut their throats. And this not from a lofty consciousness of rectitude or virtue, but simply because he is by nature—or by a careful self-training, which comes to the same thing—incapable of feeling outside pressure. Plain men look at such sublime people just as children look at the salamander who plays with molten lead, and grasps a red-hot poker, and thrusts his hand into the flame without crying out or doing himself any harm. We are lost in amazement, and wonder in vain to what miraculous force they are indebted for so blessed an immunity from the ordinary weaknesses of human nature. The riddle has to be given up. A scientific philosopher cannot in the faintest way understand the mental composi-

tion of that majority of mankind on whom anything like a reason or an argument is absolutely and utterly thrown away. And to anybody with a moderate sense of social responsibility apathy to public opinion is as mysterious, as hard to realize, as the state of mind unapproachable by reason is to the scientific inquirer. The conditions of social and intellectual pachydermatousness are in themselves equally wonderful, though the latter is a great deal the more common of the two. In fact, most people can get on very well without any active love of abstract truth, but very few would find life endurable without a fair share of the approval of their neighbours.

The same kind of power of bearing social fire without pain or discomfort is often exhibited in minor matters. Men who would shrink from an encounter with outside prejudices or opinions in very important things do not fear the punishment of singularity in trifles. Mr. Herbert Spencer, in one of his essays, seriously lays it down that it is almost a duty in every lover of individual freedom not to go to dinner-parties in a dress coat, and to wear a beard. The latter injunction has now indeed lost its point, but there are plenty of equally powerful devices for showing the world that you do not mean to be its slave. People still think it pleasant and decorous to wear tailed coats and white ties at evening parties, and we fancy

that anybody with a passion for making a social martyr of himself might easily gratify it by going out to dinner a few times in a dressing-gown or a tweed suit. Some men vindicate the right of free expansion in the human mind by leaving their hair to grow to any length it pleases, or by wearing strange head-gear, and coats fearfully and wonderfully made. They do not feel the least uncomfortable in being singular. The grins and starings with which they are greeted by a world sunk in commonplace and conventionalities move them not a jot. We can even understand their coming, after long practice, absolutely to like being pointed at, and hearing people say, not *hic est*, but *quis est?* It is quite true that society ought not to prevent a man from doing what he chooses, so long as he does not injure others. But one cannot help suspecting that some of these fearful innovators in trifles very often do exactly what they no *not* like, just for the sake of showing their daring or originality. After all, a young woman who submits to the mortification of a public trial generally gets a substantial reward for her superior courage, and the great man who defies public opinion as to the jobbing of patronage has the gratification of seeing all his family, down to the third and fourth generation, comfortably provided for. We may wonder how they manage to bear the fire so placidly, but there is not much

difficulty in seeing *why*. The case is different with these little salamanders. We can never find out what it is they really gain by their extraordinary exhibitions. And it is obvious that they lose a good deal of the very power which they are supposed to be especially desirous of obtaining. If a man wants to make the world more tolerant of speculative or theological differences, or to make it accept new social doctrines which he has come to preach, surely he is not likely to gain a more willing audience by outraging their habits in the sheerest trifles. Is a saint in a tailed coat twice a saint in a tweed shooting-jacket? On the contrary, people would listen all the more readily to a man who differed from them in great matters if he did not flout and snub them in small ones. The identification of all uncommon and unpopular views with strange manners and uncouth attire is a fatal course for any one to pursue who wishes such views to become common and popular as speedily as may be.

In by far the majority of cases, contempt for public opinion is a sign either of consummate impudence or surpassing shallowness. The man whose chief care in life is, in all his opinions and habits, to be in a complacent minority of one, never makes any mark on those who are brought into contact with him, and for the sufficient reason that he has no mark particularly worth making.

The most egotistical of men, if he only digs a little way below the surface, is sure to come on a great deal that he cannot but recognise as good and admirable, which the world recognises as fully as he himself does. It is only when they never take the trouble to go below what is immediately visible that people acquire a habit of thinking all the rest of the world but themselves a parcel of wrong-headed idiots. And the other phase of contempt for public censure, arising from selfishness or impudence, is the reflection of a similar theory. The only difference is, that while the one man supposes the average intelligence of his neighbours to stand at zero, the other regards their average virtue as a mere empty pretence and sham.

Of course it should be observed that there is a thoroughly good side to this power of looking down on the world. A man may rebel against social pressure, and pass through the fire of general censure without flinching, for other reasons than that he considers society to be made up of fools and dupes, and the end-all and be-all of social duty to consist in every one pursuing his own lowest and most immediate interest. Nearly every thoughtful person can find points in which he dislikes the conduct or opinions of those about him, and in which he is not disposed to let himself conform to them. In order to hold his ground in

these respects without losing ground elsewhere, he must have both courage and knack. The first is easier and commoner than the second. Plenty of men have pluck enough to touch the hot metal, but then they get burnt. They boldly defy popular and orthodox opinion—for instance, about the Darwin controversy, or the Pentateuch, or the observance of Sunday. Then they suddenly find themselves branded with a dozen evil names. A man of another sort will contrive to hold just the same unfashionable opinions, and even to express them to a tolerably wide extent, without receiving any punishment whatever. He understands the trick of dealing with the fiery element. This is by no means saying that the clever salamander is the nobler or worthier of the two. He seems to have the best of it, and so he has in one sense. Still, as a rule, the other would probably rather be without the knack, and bear whatever wounds he may get inflicted on him with as much equanimity as he happens to be master of.

V.

VAGUE AIMS.

THE common effect of a play, a romance, or any other appeal to the imagination, upon young people, unless they are of a strangely susceptible temper, is to fill them with dreams of an heroic and extraordinary future for themselves. They do not picture a set of circumstances exactly resembling those in the scene before them, but the excitement of imagination which the scene produces inspires them, while it lasts, with a crowd of vague fancies about their own career. The fortunes of the hero and heroine are, it may be presumed, interesting to all the spectators, but the interest would probably be found in each case to be aroused by distinct causes. Among persons who have culture enough to appreciate with genuine relish an artistic novel, how many agree in liking the same characters for precisely the same reasons? And

in the narrower class of those who enjoy music, without the cant and transcendental jargon with which it is sometimes invested, in how many does the same piece awaken precisely the same set of images? The secret of this seems to be that each reader or listener goes to his own life to discover for himself the meaning and force of the composition. The older he gets, the more natural does it appear that his imagination should, in such circumstances, revert to the past rather than the future; but with the young it is not less natural that all healthy mental excitement of this kind should people the days to come with pleasant shadows. This process it used to be the fashion, and among some strait sects it still remains the fashion, to denounce as fatally enervating and unwholesome. The modern view, however, generally is that building castles in the air, if the process is only superintended by reason and common sense, not only does not necessarily dissipate the mind, but may actually exert a vastly more bracing influence upon it than some of the most popular tonics of former times.

The tremendous bustle and restlessness which characterise modern society are partly due to the new doctrines on this point. People allow themselves to dream more, and their dreams make them work all the harder. It is admitted, for example, that a barrister is all the more likely to make a

practice of two or three thousand a year if he starts in life with a general purpose of getting to the woolsack. And a man will scarcely make a worse working curate because in his own mind he is always dreaming that some day or other he will write a book that shall effect a perfect restoration of belief. The lawyer, for the short time that law leaves him the free use of his imaginative faculties, if he has any, receives a new stimulus and new energy in the drudgery of his profession whenever he sees a play or hears an opera, because the excitement makes him more ready to believe the possibility of his attaining what he wishes. If he is a fool, of course he may sit dreaming all day long in his chambers, waiting for a Queen's Messenger with the Great Seal in his pocket; but the loftiness of his aim found him a fool to begin with, and did not make him one. If, on the other hand, he is a sensible man—sensible, that is, for legal purposes—he will work like a slave at his precedents, statutes, cases, and all the rest of it; but whenever he comes within range of any powerful work of imagination, whether poetry or music or anything else, he will still find himself dreaming about the glory of his career. Whether he does this in a stupid and conceited way, or with a certain loftiness, depends obviously on the general force and depth of his character. The curate, too, need not neglect the poor, nor be

unpunctual at funerals, nor preach silly sermons, nor turn sulky and unsociable at tea-parties and croquet, because he has a fancy that he will eventually prove the most conspicuous theologian of his time. On the contrary, a tremendously broad purpose of this sort is often the best form of encouragement which some men can have to the cheerful performance of routine duties. People with crotchets are notoriously capable of rare vigour and perseverance in matters where their crotchets are not immediately concerned. A man who had persuaded himself, and was devoting his whole life to persuading others, that he had squared the circle or discovered the secret of perpetual motion, would probably make an uncommonly useful missionary, and not a bad schoolmaster in one of those establishments where a person is expressly kept for the purpose of "exercising a moral influence" out of school hours.

But there is another and more curious sort of castle-building that may be considered peculiar to modern times. The dreams of professional ambition and religious enthusiasm are by no means an exclusively modern phenomenon, though modern changes have, in various ways, done much to encourage them. The strange feature of this new restlessness is the utter uncertainty of its object. Those who are affected by it would be puzzled to say with any clearness why they are

discontented, or what they are aiming at. A man who has grown rich, and been blessed with a quiver full of grown-up daughters, will be at no loss to know what we mean. His daughters seem to have everything within their reach that can make life enjoyable—money, good looks, refined tastes, and a reasonable prospect of eligible husbands. To a certain extent they are contented; but the key to their whole life is to be found in a set of vague aspirations which, though invisible on the surface, underlie everything they do or think about. What these aspirations amount to is something quite indefinable. It is not the ordinary snobbish fever about knowing lords or county magnates, and anything like tuft-hunting young ladies of this peculiar stamp scorn most heartily. They may experience a slight throb of satisfaction on being asked to dine at the house of the great nobleman of the neighbourhood, but only because it is an indirect step to the attainment of their mysterious designs. They are anxious to be great people on their own account, and to shake off commercial connexions, without hanging on to the skirts of superior rank. These vague social aims are the natural product of a culture that has no position and no outlet. The sons of a merchant who has realized a fortune may do whatever they like. If they want to make more money, they may carry on the business; or if, with greater simplicity of

purpose, they merely want to spend their father's money, they may go into the Guards, or lounge at the Bar, or do nothing at all. But with daughters the case is widely different. They can go neither into the counting-house nor into the Guards. They have had the best education that can be got for money, as the father in the expansion of port would tell you, and if the soil on which the education fell was good, it must be uncommonly hard to return to the bondage of a narrow and vulgar home circle. The father keeps them generously supplied with pocket-money, and cannot imagine the mind which a handsome quarterly cheque paid punctually, and without reduction for income-tax, will not fill with perennial satisfaction. The mother sagely discourses as if their world of ideas and habits and prospects were exactly co-extensive with her own, and they listen with dutiful attention. Sometimes perhaps they venture to air their little stock of mental novelties before their elders, but they soon find that it is as inexpedient as ever to pour new wine into old bottles. These conditions unite to fill the feminine breast with all sorts of vague aims. Girls so placed cannot be called discontented or ungrateful, but they find an unconscious relief in thinking of a future whose only clearly distinguishable feature is its total difference from the present. And, though vague, they have always some element in their picture

that is meant to be practical. The imaginary career always points to some rational end. They resolve either to do good, or to earn fame, or to fight their way to some higher social position. This is vague and hazy enough, and very probably may come to nothing; but it is easy to understand in a general way what it means. The English young lady, in spite of all the silliness which is often rather unfairly ascribed to her, would never fall into the follies which abound among the women of the United States. She may not be quite sure what it is she wants, but she never pants to "throw her soul into the arms of the Infinite." Provided the habit of dreaming be regulated by ordinary sense, it would be hard to grudge any solace it may bring to the lethargy of unfortunate spinsters who require some relief from the dulness of actual life.

Unluckily, the practice of filling-in the future with uncertain objects is not always confined to young ladies with education and incomes, and nothing to do with either. Young men with extremely little education, and even less incomes, are often just as much addicted to letting their imagination roam pleasantly through hazy and untried regions, and not even the necessities of life succeed in thoroughly awakening them. There are generally one or two men of this description at either of the Universities at any given time.

They come up from some lower form at school with a conviction that they have a genius whose delicacy and freshness would be destroyed by being confined, even for a couple of years, within the narrow groove of university reading. Its bloom would fade away as soon as it ceased to be untutored. Perhaps they have persuaded a few adoring female relatives and one or two weak-minded undergraduate friends to agree with them, and, supported by this select and faithful band, they feel justified in nursing their tender powers in the most complete and unbroken repose. Nobody has the smallest idea to what use these powers are to be put when they are ripe enough to display themselves without risk of injury, or could even tell with accuracy what evidence there is of their existence at all. At length the genius is brought face to face with the necessity of making a livelihood, and the same objections which prevented him from reading at college serve to exclude all ordinary callings. The Church is too confining; the bar is too hard and dry; physic is too commonplace; trade is too coarse; and the whole farce commonly ends in the dignity of usher at an inferior school.

The truth is, that vague aims are only safe when they are subsidiary to aims that are well defined and are being vigorously pursued. They are a luxury which ought only to be indulged in either

by young ladies who, in our present system, have nothing better to interest them, or else by men who get through plenty of hard work every day. Nobody who has been reading and writing for ten or twelve hours is in much danger of becoming mentally enervated, because, in musing over the after-dinner cup, he allows himself to view his future "through a vinous mist."

> This earth is rich in man and maid;
> With fair horizons bound;
> This whole wide earth of light and shade
> Comes out, a perfect round.
> High over roaring Temple-bar,
> And set in Heaven's third story,
> He looks at all things as they are,
> But through a kind of glory.

The work of the morrow will not appear a whit duller or more irksome for being in strong contrast with these airy visions. The miser is urged on to fresh grubbing and pinching by every dream of untold heaps, and a man need not slacken at the work in hand merely because he fancies he will do a number of fine things at some future day. The notion of writing a novel, for example, is a favourite dream with many healthy and industrious persons. They have a little difficulty about the plot, but they know exactly whom of their friends they are going to introduce, and have thought of many admirable and striking reflections as subjects for occasional digressions. Entertaining a dim

project of this sort does not make anybody at all more keenly susceptible to the fretting of his every-day harness. The prospect that he will one day be covered with glory actually makes the collar sit easier for the present, and the vagueness of the design is its prime merit. As soon as a plan ceases to be vague, the difficulties belonging to its execution immediately stand out with distressing clearness and force. It is no longer calculated to furnish a pleasant relief from the hard distinctness that marks the objects of practical life. The moment you sit down to write the first chapter of the novel which is to make the world ring with your fame, it is astounding what a cloud comes over your fancy, and how that which was once the most delightful object of contemplation in your leisure moments is now your most relentless bugbear. The wise man will always have an ample stock of clear practical ends in view, as well as a pet supply of vague and unfixed aims, which, if he be truly wise, he will be in no haste to reduce to practical conditions.

VI.

FALLING OFF.

WHEN young ladies hear a man talk of his old set at college, they generally exclaim how delightful it must be to meet in after life, to revive old associations, talk over old days, and so forth. The picture is one precisely calculated to strike a sentimental imagination. The notion of a dozen men leaving for a moment the sordid cares of active life, and throwing themselves freely back into the spirit of a time when life had no cares, but only represented hopes and aspirations, is eminently attractive to people who are fond of imagining nice situations and touching scenes. It is not without a feeling of profound sorrow that one recognises the difficulties that stand in the way of realizing so charming an idea. As a rule, the members making a college set are scattered to the four quarters of the globe before they have reached five-and-

twenty. One is out in India, another is in the Temple, a third is tending sheep in New Zealand, a fourth is shepherd of souls in Rutlandshire, while a fifth is being gradually petrified into a college don. Supposing circumstances to bring them together again twenty years later, there is really not much chance, except in a few uncommon cases, of the young ladies' notion coming true. The returned civil servant is stamped with the uncomfortable traits of the Anglo-Indian, the barrister has perhaps changed from a human being into a lawyer, the don is engrossed in all the pettiness of college politics, and the only persons with any mutual sympathy are the two shepherds, between whom long social isolation and companionship with aborigines and sheep have induced a certain resemblance. We must, however, draw a distinction. If the set happens to have been one based on athletic principles, the reunion will probably be a great deal more successful than if the men, when lads, had liked one another, not because they could all pull or play cricket, but on intellectual grounds —because they liked the same books, and held, or fancied they held, the same kind of views on religious and philosophic questions. A simple taste of any sort, like boating, or shooting, or cricket, can never lead its votaries very widely apart, and springing as it does very much from physical constitution, is more likely to be permanent.

A middle-aged conveyancer, whom over-work has made too thin, or a parson whom plenty of country air and sound port and an easy parish have made too stout, to take an oar or handle a bat, may still find a great deal of pleasure in talking over old scores or memorable spurts, and in discussing questions of round-hand bowling, and a short or sweeping stroke. But the men who composed an "earnest" set very seldom retain the common ground on which they began life. Intellectual activity leads to every possible variety of opinion, and the history of the last thirty years supplies, unhappily, too many proofs that this gradually developed variety is quite capable of turning the friendship of youth into the gravest enmity in after life. But the cases in which divergence of view acts so powerfully as to bring about this deplorable consummation are few in comparison, and the more common result is the growth either of dumb indifference, or else of a deep but unexpressed disapprobation. There are some who will not believe that anybody who differs from them has been actuated by anything but sheer mental obliquity. The majority, however—with reference to those who started from the same point with themselves, but in course of time have wandered into strange roads—content their own judgment and gratify their self-love by lamenting with pathetic sincerity how much their former friend has fallen off.

This is a particularly favourite device with unconverted transcendentalists. There is always, both in universities and every other community, a small set of young men, whose common bond is a fervent attachment to Emerson and to the less valuable parts of Mr. Carlyle's teaching. They are very strong upon the necessity of worshipping sorrow, and of recognising all sorts of nameless mysteriousnesses in man. They sit up half the night declaiming against gigmanity and phantasms, and logic and political economy, which they know nothing about, and Bentham, whom they have never read, and annihilate society with scorching sarcasms borrowed from their idols. They talk in a language, and think in a set of ideas, and live in a mental world, beyond the ken or apprehension of ordinary mortals. In due time some of these eloquent sentimentalists find it expedient to make a living in the odious and contemptible world. That labour which they have so long extolled as the sole glory of intelligent beings, and the true mission of the immensity of man on this earth, they find by no means so grand and sublime as they used to suppose in the exalted season when they had nothing to do. Drawing leases or pleading in cases of disputed contracts, or feeling pulses and looking at tongues all day, or even christening and marrying and taking tea with churchwardens, may become terribly tedious after

a time; but they may do a man immense service by teaching him something about what is actual in men, instead of leaving him to go through life vapouring about their mysteriousnesses. He will gradually discover that society is far from being so base and hypocritical as he used to think, but is a machine which, though always and boundlessly susceptible of improvement, generally works for the welfare of the community as well as the age will allow; that man is in practice not so low, nor in capacity so unspeakably sublime, as his former teachers maintain; that logic is, on the whole, rather a useful science; that, after all, some of the discoveries of political economy have largely ameliorated the condition of mankind, and that Bentham was not a mere monster of malevolent shallowness. All this and much more of a like tendency, reveals itself to him by degrees, until at length his emancipation from the trammels of the old sentimentalism is complete. Meanwhile, some other member of the set may have had money enough to make him independent of a profession. He only sees so much of society as happens to sympathize with his own tastes, and entirely escapes the wholesome necessity of doing irksome and disagreeable tasks, and of mixing with plain folks who look at life practically, or even coarsely. He is so absolutely filled with aphorisms like Emer-

son's, that "life is a search after power," as to overlook the fact that, with a vast majority of human creatures, life is a search after bread-and-butter. It is of no use to ask him, in the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, "Doth a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?" One cannot demand what good comes of his sublime thoughts and ineffable phrases, because looking to consequences is Benthamism, Gigmanism, and a hundred other things. And so it comes to pass, that when the two bosom friends meet, after a long interval, to revive old associations and realize the young lady's vision, they separate in some sort mutually disgusted, the man of the world wondering how on earth the common conditions of life have failed to disperse the senseless notions of the transcendentalist, who, on the other hand, deplores with edifying compassion the falling off which has taken place in one who in old days promised so well.

And the same account is true of the sets whose earnestness takes an Anglican or an Evangelical turn. If any of the number are brought, by a wider experience of life, to change extreme views for others of more toleration and justice, the same cry of falling off is raised by those who remain true to pristine doctrines and practice. No allowance is made for altered outward conditions of their friend's life, nor for irresistible influ-

ences which may have operated upon it, nor even for the downright impracticability of their particular opinions in his position. Finding that, though still sympathizing with them in the main, he has ceased to be blindly thorough-going, they bewail his sad lapse into worldliness and latitudinarianism, and hug their own superior strength of character. Laymen are often equally unreasonable about clergymen. They go down to see a friend whose tremendous enthusiasm when he went into orders almost persuaded them to go and do likewise, and they find him talking about christenings, and funerals, and sermons, much as they talk about writing an article, or keeping an appointment in the City. This strikes them as a very shocking relapse, and, travelling back to town together, they speak of him with a kind of benign melancholy, as of one who has mistaken his vocation. As if it were possible for a man to go through a routine of even the most impressive offices year after year, and still retain enough of freshness never to mention them without an outburst of enthusiastic feeling! They forget also, that, even if he could keep it vigorous, the boisterous enthusiasm which was so attractive to them in former years, is, in nine cases out of ten, about the least serviceable quality a parson can have.

Among women, too, it is very common to hear

a gushing spinster of five-and-thirty deplore the falling off which has taken place in the character of this or that matron of her acquaintance. Before she was married, the complaint runs, she had the most refined taste, and the loftiest aspirations, and the noblest convictions about the beauty and harmony of life. She would read "Faust," and delight in the abstrusest parts of Beethoven, and be excited about Darwin and Colenso, and all sorts of subjects. Marriage has wholly undermined this fair fabric. She now finds greater pleasure in playing jigs to her children than she ever found in the grand masters, has almost forgotten her German, and Italian, and French, and is a good deal more interested in the management of her own nursery than in speculations on the cradle of the human race. But there may be no falling off in all this. One may, indeed, regret that married women so frequently allow domestic worries to extinguish all the old tastes, and accomplishments, and interests; but there would be much stronger ground for regret, and for crying out about falling off, if they read "Faust," and dreamed over sonatas, while their children were left to be dragged up by nurses and tutors.

People who thus love to lament the falling off of old friends, and who find in the lament a certain stimulus to fresh energy in their own path, are

only obeying the instinct which makes all men demand more or less of self-approbation as a condition of existence. Only with them the strength of the instinct is in excess. They cannot think themselves quite right unless they are fully persuaded that those who have separated from them are wrong, and they are apparently unable to imagine that an infinite variety of paths may lead to the same common centre. And they are commonly, too, people who never grow. They do not fall off, in one sense, because they do not move; but their arrested growth is the very worst form of falling off. The transcendentalist deploring the fate of his friend whom intercourse with men and women has taught a more substantial creed is as one who should bewail that a child had "fallen off" into a man. From some aspects the child is the nicer object of the two, but the man is immeasurably more useful after all, and if the child grows at all it must become a man. But these people prefer, as it were, to remain children, and whine about their companions who prefer to grow up. And this suggests a reason why one is generally so disappointed with a friend from whom one has been long separated. When death deprives us of a child we are quite unable to think of it as anything but a child, and never dream of what it would have been if it had lived to be twenty or forty. Just in the same way, forgetting how

time has fled, we still half expect to meet the jovial free-spirited young fellow who went to India twenty years since. Instead of this, we find somebody quite different, and our first thought is how dreadfully he has fallen off. With some the first thought may be lasting. It would probably be more just to suppose that the old character in its essence still remains, but has been moulded by circumstances into a new shape. Of course, the bosom friend of one's youth may be a great bore for all this, only it is well to remember that he may find the same decay in you which you regret to detect in him. He may still be as honest and earnest as he used to be, but his earnestness has taken the useful form of strong views about indigo-planting, and ryots, and land-tenure, while your own has found an outlet in philanthropy, or writing novels, or driving grammar into little boys. It is absurd to argue, because you don't care for ryots, nor he for little boys, that therefore either of you has fallen off in depth or strength of character.

Men of a certain temperament are apt to get into a regular habit of discovering the degeneracy of their friends. Nothing can be more dangerous than a blissful belief of this kind, that everybody else is falling off. It is different from a mere spirit of detraction or envy, and may involve no downright ill-will or lack of amiability; but in proportion as it becomes essential to anybody's

comfort, the nearer he is approaching that odious but not rare state of mind in which a man honestly thinks himself about the wisest and best person that ever existed. A more utter shipwreck than this it is very hard to conceive. Of course, we are not pretending that there is no such thing as falling off. Only too often the props and stays of character are seen unaccountably to give way, and the brightest moral and intellectual promise brings forth mere shrivelled leafage. In such a case to refrain from recognising an unmistakable fact would be the silliest sort of mock humility. The difficulty is to distinguish between real degeneracy of this sort and that change which has been the natural and blameless result of the conditions surrounding a man, but which happens to have been in a different path from that in which we ourselves have advanced or stood still, as the case may be.

VII.

MINOR TRIBULATIONS.

IT is not very easy to understand on what exact principle people are accustomed to measure out their sympathy with the troubles and misfortunes of their neighbours. There are some calamities for which the man whom they have befallen will receive sincere condolence from his friends, while even those in whom it is not sincere will decently feign it. But there are sorrows of another kind, on account of which nobody will sympathize with him, or even pretend to sympathize with him, and for which, in his own mind, he will scarcely venture to expect sympathy; and yet these last may actually be sources of far greater suffering and perturbation than the occurrences which force everybody to assume a graver aspect and a graver tone in addressing or approaching him. The man whose

dog was lately destroyed by a foolish old woman for being so thoughtless as to pant in the dog-days, if he had lost his grandmother at the age of ninety, or his child at the age of one week, would have enjoyed an abundant share of condolence. But when he declares that the fate of his dog has plunged himself and his family into inconsolable affliction, people laugh at him. There is no reason to believe that his grief is in any way either unreal or exaggerated. Nobody would deny that it is quite possible for a man—and, in a still greater degree, for a woman—to suffer genuine pain at the loss of a dog or cat; but nobody dreams of offering condolence on such occasions. Gray did, indeed, compose an ode upon the untimely end of Selina, who was drowned in a bowl of gold-fish, but his motive was probably less to express sympathy with her bereaved mistress than to point the moral that a favourite has no friend. In any case, such sympathy is strikingly exceptional. A provincial hostess whose entertainment has gone off flatly, sustains about as much mortification as if her first-born had been attacked by the small-pox; but, in the first case, her neighbours are rather delighted than otherwise, while, in the latter, they have at least as much sympathy as is naturally inspired by the close proximity of an infectious disorder. The same sort of strange inconsistency may be observed with reference to

physical pain. If your friend has a headache, you express a becoming sorrow; but let him be suffering all the horrors of Malebolge from a combination of new boots, a hot pavement, and corns, and you are allowed to remain placidly indifferent. A cynic may say that all sympathy of this kind is purely a matter of convention. We fervently congratulate a poor curate upon the eleventh little stranger with whom his wife has just presented him, though we are very well aware that the little stranger is a source of serious lamentation to the recipient of our hypocritical congratulations. We mourn gravely with the widower, bereaved of a peevish and grumbling wife who never let him enjoy an hour's peace; and we mourn tenderly with the young widow of two-and-twenty, inconsolable for the loss of her dear departed of eighty. But the fact that sympathy is often given merely because it is customary to express it in certain cases, or on certain occasions, does not affect the observation that those cases and occasions appear not to be settled on any very self-evident principle. It would seem as if the bestowal of human sympathy were regulated altogether by the kinds, and not at all by the degrees, of misery. And, moreover, the different kinds are quite incommensurable. No accumulation of misery of one sort can equal, in its claim upon general commiseration, a similar amount of misery of another sort. The loss of

ten thousand favourite dogs, or twenty thousand beloved cats, would never be compared with the loss of one aged grandmother. No arithmetical system can ever be devised for discovering a common measure of the amounts of sympathy respectively due to two kinds of grief.

Although general sympathy may well be allowed to overlook all minor tribulations, yet individuals may probably find it worth while to take them into account. More mischief than is commonly supposed comes of the supercilious neglect with which small miseries are frequently dismissed. The history of some temperaments is a long record of vexations, trifling when taken singly, but overwhelming in their accumulation. A permanently soured disposition may infallibly be engendered by the continuous action of linen invariably overstarched, shirt-buttons always neglected, and trains constantly missed. Most sermons are minor tribulations; and after a man has endured them for many years, they are apt to beget in him an illogical, but not wholly unnatural, aversion to all religious ordinances. Bad servants are, perhaps, the most intolerable of little miseries, because they are chronic, and in a measure unavoidable. But even those which are only transitory are too numerous and too bitter in a phase of existence whose duration is limited to three-score years and ten. A sedulous female correspondent who crosses

her letters, a man who bores you with raptures about his angel, stupid parties, and wet pic-nics, are tribulations which may be comparatively minor, but yet fill a grievous space in the average life of man. There are, indeed, some forms of what is unpleasant which occupy a debatable ground, and about whose classification men may differ. Are babies and bad port wine to be set down as merely minor tribulations or as catastrophes? But differences of this kind can scarcely be held to affect the general truth, that minor tribulations are not less really burdensome because they command less universal sympathy than afflictions which may be profound, but which are frequently very light. For instance, some affectation may often be discovered in the lamentations of bereaved relatives. Even when the lamentations are honest, some natural consolation is found in being, for a day or two at least, an object of attention and fuss. The pomp of crape is a wonderful anodyne. The characteristic feature of a minor tribulation is that the sufferer receives no consolation of this kind. The unlucky reviewer who has been compelled to read some atrociously absurd book does not go into mourning for his time thus wasted, or hear a eulogistic funeral oration over his intellect thus temporarily deceased. He undergoes a bald and sordid misery against which there is no sort of set-off.

Of course, if all men were heroes, and lived in a transcendental heaven upon earth, they could afford to neglect minor tribulations—if, indeed, they were conscious of them. If the world generally wagged on heroic principles, such trifles would neither attract nor demand any attention. A philosopher, living with a proper system of final causes ever before his eyes, is naturally indifferent to the little disappointments of weather, friendship, or meals. Still we have met with philosophers, of lofty mien and stoical complexion, who would fall into transports of fury over cold shaving-water or a bad hand at cards. We have known men who would declaim by the hour, in all the raptures of a self-complacent transcendentalism, about the mystic significance of the universe, about the inscrutable destiny of the human soul, about the nothingness of time and the ineffable splendours of eternity, and yet who would use very bad language over an ill-fitting coat, a fractional fall in Consols, or even an underdone potato. A man may, like Philosopher Square, have the noblest views about the abstract fitness of things, and yet not deem it inconsistent with such abstract fitness to run after the maid-servants. And we are not inclined to resort to the doctrine of the natural weakness of man for an explanation of such unedifying falling-away. The weakness is not so much in people's will as in their theory. A small

boy decked in his tall father's garments naturally trips himself up; and we need not be surprised by the constant stumblings of people who clothe themselves in a philosophy that is too big for them. Any philosophy is too big for a man of average moral size, which overlooks the reality and influence of minor tribulations. They are precisely those difficulties by which people are most commonly beset, just as it is the small loose stones on the road, and not the boulders, which bring a horse on his knees. If they are fairly recognised and measured, a man is prepared for them. But when he begins by despising them as unworthy of the notice of an immortal soul, he is tolerably sure to end by exaggerating them as far above, as he formerly depreciated them below, their natural value. The pious deacons of Salem and Ebenezer are supposed to combine a zealous belief in high Calvinistic doctrine with a fervent attachment to hot suppers after meeting, and to enjoy, with about equal satisfaction, the future perdition of the majority of mankind and the more immediate prospect of a pork-chop and a drop of something warm. Something exactly similar takes place in the moral history of all who profess to despise minor joys and to disregard minor tribulations. They have their grand universal theory, and they soon begin to have their pork-chop. Their folly consists, not in having a theory,

but in constructing it on a principle which excludes everything that is neither holy nor sublime, and overlooks with disdain all little vexations and trivial pleasures.

In most persons, disdain of this kind is sheer affectation. If a man tells you that he likes the flavour of Gladstone claret as well as that of Lafitte, or Cape as well as Port, or a bad dinner as well as a good one, you know at once that he is talking only for the sake of some imaginary effect; and you not only scout his execrable philosophy, but entirely disbelieve in his sincerity. Or if he professes to prefer a seat in the pit to a stall, or says that he would rather travel in a third-class carriage than in a first-class — alleging as the reason of his preference that the one is in itself more agreeable than the other—you are not deceived for a single moment, but detect instantly that the true reason for his extraordinary choice is no mental eccentricity, but an easily intelligible money consideration. But many are honestly ashamed to confess that they are affected by minor tribulations. They have always been trained up to be above showing vexation at small annoyances, and to repress their sorrow on all but certain conventional occasions of grief. And this is a sound view with reference to public displays, but it is not sound with reference to the straightforward expression of feeling upon occasions which

may be of obviously minor importance in life. The consolation popularly administered to anybody suffering under a small misery is embodied in the highly satisfactory formula that "it will be all the same a hundred years hence"—which may be true or not, but in either case can have little meaning. There is simply no connection whatever between the fact that your dining-room chimney always smokes, or that you have missed the last train, or that a favourite dog has been slaughtered by a silly old woman, and this comforting generalisation about the state of things a century hence. A hundred years afterwards, it probably would make no material difference in the general welfare of Bob Sawyer that Mrs. Raddle had, on a particular evening, publicly desired him to dismiss his guests, and had declined to allow him any hot water. And in spite of Mr. Brocklehurst, in "Jane Eyre," having ordered that all the girls at Lowood should have their curls cut off, things would still present about the same aspect a century later as if he had made no such order. But this does not touch the question. This argument notwithstanding, we may justly sympathize with Bob Sawyer on the one hand, and execrate Mr. Brocklehurst as a canting humbug on the other. This kind of philosophy is obviously based on a principle which would take away every reasonable motive and purpose in life, if carried out to its

logical conclusion. A man could very easily persuade himself that it would be all the same a hundred years hence whether he stole his daily bread or earned it. There is no end to the folly and stupid indifference involved in this pinchbeck stoicism. The wise man will look upon things in their natural aspect, and neither through a microscope which exaggerates them beyond their true dimensions, nor through an inverted telescope which gives them the unreal proportions of remote distance.

VIII.

THRIFT.

THRIFT is one of the virtues which the rich find an especial comfort in recommending to the poor. A philanthropic member of Parliament seems to think it the most essential duty of his position to deliver an annual sermon upon this text to the long-suffering Athenæum, or Mechanics' Institution of his borough, and sober and industrious artisans are lectured by the hour upon the advantages of taking care of the pence, and constantly reminded in more or less sonorous phrase, that a pin a day is a groat a year. In manufacturing towns, such harangues are listened to by the very class which has least need of any exhortation to be thrifty and careful, the people who belong to Athenæums being always the soberest and most respectable of the operatives. In purely agricultural regions,

the taste for sermonizing on this particular virtue is still more absurd, for it is surely a work of supererogation, if it be not a piece of unseasonable irony, to urge a man to be thrifty who has to keep himself and a family on twelve or thirteen shillings a week. Among the many follies which the supporters of Mechanics' Institutions have perpetrated, none has been more egregious than this —of turning them into pulpits whence well-to-do amateurs may gratify their fancy for effecting the moral elevation of their less well-to-do neighbours. The dilettantism of virtue is supremely objectionable, because virtue, of its very essence, is either practical or nothing. Yet we have heard a man with a mass of unpaid College debts of many years' standing, enjoin the practice of thrift upon an assemblage of mechanics, every one of whom had money in the savings'-bank, with a fervour that astounded the few persons present who knew the earnest orator's private position. Even those who do not know from their own experience the precious luxury of exhorting other people to be good are disposed to entertain a general sort of conviction that thrift is a virtue for which a gentleman has no use—nay, one which, on the whole, is rather unbecoming his position. Of course, all the world admits, though unluckily all the world does not obey, the wholesome law that it is good for men not to spend more than they

have. But this is not the question. If thrift means spending only as much as a man has to spend, the thriftiest class in the country would be the very poorest, who are unable to get credit. It obviously denotes a great deal more. It is the virtue which lies midway between the two opposed vices of parsimony and prodigality. The fashion has been to look upon it as a respectable quality and nothing more, found principally among the Scotch, and much to be desired among the poorer classes in England. That it involves a really lofty moral excellence has not as yet been so commonly recognised. Thrift is undeniably one of the most arduous modes of self-control, but, like every other virtue which concerns either the making or the spending of money, it is subject to a great deal of artificial disparagement. We are so accustomed to hear money spoken of scornfully —to hear that it is trash, filth, and the root of all evil—that the merit of spending it carefully and considerately is overlooked, and only ranks among the second-rate virtues which are obligingly left to the labouring classes.

The word "thrift" is sometimes used as if it meant merely the habit of saving, but it is quite possible to imagine men in such a position that they might have large incomes without saving a penny, and still be fairly called thrifty. A man may spend ten thousand a year thriftily; he may

spend it so that none of it is wasted. For, after all, this is the true test of thrift alike in poor and rich. It is simply a habit of not wasting money. It is waste in an artisan who has children dependent on him to spend a shilling on Saturday night in gin, but it may not be waste in his employer to lay down a pipe of wine or to keep a dozen horses. Yet it is waste in the rich man if he allows his household, as William Pitt did, to consume, or his butcher to charge him for, nine hundred pounds' weight of meat a week. The tavern-score of the mechanic and the butcher's bill of a man like Pitt are equal proofs of unthrift, and it is probable that an equal amount of unthrift flourishes in the two classes to which they respectively belong, only the results in the higher classes are less physically distressing. If a weaver is thriftless, his furniture goes to the pawnbroker or the bailiff, he ends his days in the workhouse, and his wife and children are reduced to starvation and mendicancy. With those who can afford to be thriftless on a large scale the fall is much less striking. The prodigal son who has got through his fortune is seldom reduced so low in our time as to fill his belly with husks. Though unthrift may have brought him down to the extreme of neediness, he can generally contrive, somehow or other, to have "a neat repast with wine" once or twice a week at the club, to smoke excellent

cigars, and entail no great distress upon anybody, excepting, it may be, his creditors. If things come to the worst, he can take a trip to Boulogne, or some other Continental workhouse for paupers of quality, where there is a good deal of pleasure of a certain kind to be got by the philosophic spendthrift. It would be interesting to know how far the reflections of the pecuniary exile who tries to espy the opposite coast from the Boulogne cliffs coincide with those of the bankrupt weaver as he looks up and down the street and suns himself on the workhouse flags.

But the thriftlessness which involves ruin is that which there is least need to notice. There are other much more prevalent forms of it which are attended with no violent financial catastrophe, but are sufficient, for all that, to work a most mischievous enervation of character. Want of thrift should not be confounded with sheer extravagance. There are many persons whom one would scarcely call extravagant, and yet who are equally far removed from being thrifty. They do not squander their money in the reckless gratification of costly tastes, yet they never have any to spare. They never know how it has gone, and at the end of the year they are unable to show anything for it. In the vulgar but expressive phrase, they "muddle it away." They do not give expensive parties, nor keep a pack of hounds,

nor invest in Greek bonds, nor purchase old Chelsea ware or black-letter copies; they do not even fritter it away, as Sheridan said, in paying their debts; and yet the income disappears as if by some process of conjuration. We most of us know people whose lives are made thoroughly uncomfortable by an eternal perplexity as to how their money manages to spend itself. They try in vain to keep accounts, and after devoting hours to them find their perplexity a thousandfold increased by a stubborn and irreconcilable discrepancy between the balance of the figures and the amount of cash in hand. They generally have, as a matter of fact, about one-fifth of what, according to their calculations, they ought to have. Then, like Pip in "Great Expectations," they have recourse to the wonderful device of "margins," which may give a symmetrical appearance to the accounts, but are scarcely, on the whole, a satisfactory expedient. The habit of checking accounts accurately is perhaps the best possible guarantee for thrift, and it is surprising, in a nation of shopkeepers, that it is not more universally practised. Most people keep accounts of one sort or another, but the number of those who keep them with care and minute attention is comparatively small. They are tolerably particular about totals, but forget that the whole secret of thrifty living is in the items. If the only object be to live within

one's income, then a few totals will be enough; but plainly, if the object be *not to waste money*, everything must depend upon details. The fact that you have only spent nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds during the year, while you have made a thousand, may be quite compatible with an immense amount of unthrift. Everybody who is not a mere prodigal and good-for-nothing is interested in knowing how much he spends, but only the thrifty man is anxious to know *how* his outlay is managed, and is resolute that no part of it shall go without substantial return in one shape or another. Dr. Watts fancied that he had invented an infallible recipe for virtue in general when he enjoined the practice of repeating thrice at bed-time every action and thought of the past day. With more reason it might be urged that the habit of putting down the items of each day's expenditure would be, in the long run, an infallible means of breeding the particular virtue of thrift. Of course it is quite possible for a man to waste more time over this sort of thing than the result is worth. We have seen a methodical man spend an hour and a half over an error of a halfpenny in his domestic accounts. He had a halfpenny too much, and could not make out how it came into his pocket. He would have done more wisely to throw it out into the street than

allow it to take up so disproportionate an amount of three-score years and ten. So there are others who, when travelling for pleasure, insist upon taking stock every three or four hours, and discovering, as they express it, where they are. A threepenny gratuity given to a cabman, if forgotten, is quite enough to afflict them with the liveliest uneasiness for many hours, until the missing link of the financial chain is recovered. But these absurdities on the part of over-zealous votaries of method do not discredit the rule. *Dolus latet in generalibus.* The comprehensive entry of "Personal Expenses," for example, is convenient, and tells no tales; but, once resolved into its component elements, it must give a man considerable insight into his own character, besides possibly affecting him with some gentle remorse. For the proportion of those who never waste any money at all to those who waste a great deal is exceedingly small. Perhaps the customs of university life are responsible for much of this. Among the generous youths of Oxford and Cambridge the virtue of thrift is unquestionably not popular. They are apt to think it a fine thing to pay—or may we say *not* to pay?—and ask no questions. They have firmly embraced the great economical principle that credit is the soul of commerce, and the item of interest which is an

unfortunate incident of the soul of commerce is very fatal to thrift. Five per cent. for the wine drunk and the ten thousand pots of jam swallowed years and years ago, for coats and boots and gay gloves long since worn out, for gorgeous scarves which have been long superseded by white ties, for the use of hacks and hunters which have now been for years in the dung-cart line or sold to the knackers—this practical reminiscence exercises a gloomy influence over pecuniary virtue. What an instructive discourse might be delivered by an Oxford or Cambridge accountant of a philosophic turn of mind! Tradesmen from Belgravia, Tyburnia, Bloomsbury, could readily supply an abundance of corroborative illustrations. A picture would be disclosed fully as striking as any philanthropist ever invented when thundering against "the thriftlessness of the masses." And "the masses," moreover, have an excuse which their social superiors have not. The wise and careful outlay of money—for this, and not penurious frugality is the true thrift—is one of the effects of education. Thrift is, in short, only another form of the familiar virtue which enables a man to refrain from the present gratification of whims and fancies with a view to more solid subsequent advantages. And this is one of the distinctive characteristics of the educated mind. Some may think that we are placing a mere

money virtue too high. But, as a living writer has well said :—

> He who knows how to spare and how to abound has a great knowledge; for if we take account of all the virtues with which money is mixed up—honesty, justice, generosity, charity, frugality, forethought, self-sacrifice—and all their correlative vices, it is a knowledge which goes near to cover the length and breadth of humanity; and a right measure in getting, saving, spending, giving, taking, lending, borrowing, and bequeathing would almost argue a perfect man.

One of the most striking peculiarities about thriftless people is a constant expectation of sympathy, whenever their carelessness brings them into embarrassment. They speak of money as housekeepers speak of servants, or as Exeter Hall divines speak of the world. The whole fault lies on one side, and that, of course, not their own. Money is to them what her trunks and bandboxes and baskets are to a nervous old lady on a journey; only the journey never ends, and the trunks are constantly missing, and the bottoms of the bandboxes perpetually tumbling out. The demon of gold bears them an especial grudge, and ever eludes their grasp. Nobody worthy of the name of friend can refuse sympathy for those against whom fortune is so spiteful. Then they will advance a stage, and demand practical illustrations of sympathy from their friends in the shape of a "temporary obligation." The obligation soon changes its character and

becomes consolidated. Friends as well as fortune quarrel with these unlucky beings, who then either drift on into downright beggary, or else, just contriving to hold their heads above water, pass their days in one continued and sordid struggle. Why we should sympathize with the folly and carelessness which produce such results is not evident. There are some forms of weakness which we may justly compassionate, but the loose self-indulgence and silly neglect which are comprised in thriftlessness deserve contempt rather than pity. Solvency is, after all, one of the prime social virtues, and the people who flounder helplessly through the world for lack of it have nearly always themselves to thank for the shallows and miseries in which their life is bound.

IX.

DOMESTIC AUTOCRACY.

THE theory of family government seems to be undergoing some remarkable modifications which may possibly end in an entire transformation of the popular sentiments on the subject, and the advocates of a strong paternal autocracy may become as few as those of energetic political despotisms. Most people in England, excepting perhaps Mr. Carlyle, have ceased to believe in beneficent tyrants, for, even granting that we could ensure a permanent supply of them, we have learnt that government has other ends than the most vigorous possible despatch of public business. On much the same principle, we are beginning to see more and more clearly that, though the maintenance of a tight rein secures a trimness of appearance and regularity of pace that are irresistibly attractive to

minds of a certain mould, yet this outward domestic decorum is very apt to fall away as soon as circumstances have made the slackening of the rein inevitable; and that, even if its permanence could be relied on, it is far from being the highest result we have a right to expect. We no longer wonder how it is that the sons of men of the most rigid piety so often turn out the most incorrigible scamps, and that the daughters of devout mothers grow into the boldest flirts and friskiest matrons. It is now a pretty generally admitted error to attempt to force all young minds into the same attitude, or confine them to one posture; and nobody is ever surprised to hear that a lad who was only allowed to read one set of books, and was compelled to read them in season and out of season, who never had any opportunity of travelling out of one narrow circle of ideas or infringing a tedious monotony of habits, has made free with the till, or run away with the housemaid, or got into the fastest set in the university and ruined himself for life. We have read somewhere of a wise old lady who, on being consulted by a disquieted mother about the ill-success which had attended her strenuous and minute efforts to make her children all that they should be, replied, "My dear, they want a little wholesome neglect." And perhaps, in the cases of nine men out of ten, this wholesome neglect is about the hardest thing that could be asked of

them. Almost anybody has the faculty of unremitting attention, but that of discreet indifference is one of the rarest gifts, and this even in people whom in most respects we have the best reason to admire. The very temper which makes a man honestly eager to see everybody in whom he is interested intelligent and virtuous is particularly apt to make him impatient of whatever, in his own view, does not directly and palpably tend to this end; and often, in education, it makes him miss the mark, by preventing him from seeing the great truth that oneness of end is compatible with diversity of means. Some people make life a burden to themselves by over-much pondering on those outbreaks of rude nature which are of such constant occurrence in the lives of all children, and they harass the victims of their care into a chronic fractiousness or a confirmed priggishness. And yet men of this sort have often a force and directness of mind which, were it not alloyed with an excess of the autocratic element, would furnish the best conceivable base for that unconscious assimilation of character which always takes place between the young and those to whom they are accustomed to look up.

It is not very difficult to see the connection between this mental strength and the minute despotism which so commonly distorts or enfeebles its natural effect, any more than it is difficult to

recognise the fact that higher culture tends to break it. People who hold very strong views on any subject have a tendency as deep as human nature to urge everybody else to share them. It is a familiar truth that only in the most highly-trained minds does the egotism of fervent convictions fail to over-ride all other considerations. We do not expect a bigot to live in much harmony with people whom he cannot proselytize. For instance, old Samuel Wesley, the father of the founder of Methodism, and a most vehement Whig, discovering accidentally that his wife did not say "Amen" to the prayers for the recovery of William III. during his last illness, refused to live with her any longer, and a separation actually took place on this account. If he had been a weaker man, he would not have valued his own opinions sufficiently to make him take any great interest in those of his wife; and if he had been stronger, he would have been rather proud of a wife with sufficient character to hold political views of her own. Strong displays of this kind, while partly due to warmth of belief on some particular point, are also in a certain measure the result of the propensity which the phrenologists placed just above and behind the ear, and styled Combativeness, but which philosophers now classify among the sentiments as the love of power. In John Wesley this love of domestic supremacy was quite as strong

as it was in his father, and, being more love of supremacy for its own sake, vented itself in even more audacious forms. "Know me," he says, in one of his letters to his jealous wife, "and know yourself. Suspect me no more, asperse me no more, provoke me no more; do not any longer contend for mastery, for power, money, or praise; be content to be a private, insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. Of what importance is your character to mankind? If you was buried just now, or if you had never lived, what loss would it be to the cause of God?" It would be hard to match the lofty self-complacency of this rebuke, but at all events it breathes a certain royal air which raises it above the vulgar selfishness that is very commonly the secret of an autocratic character. Many husbands talk to their wives with quite as much arrogance, but with a great deal less excuse. Wesley's wife was a shrew of the most intolerable sort. She pestered him with venomous calumnies, and even refused to let him have any money in his pocket for fear he should pour it into the laps of depraved women. A man tied to a horrid monomaniac of this kind may be pardoned for telling her bluntly that her instant death would not make the slightest difference either to himself personally or in the general scheme of the universe. But the more commonplace type of domestic autocrat snubs and scolds

his wife, not for aspersing his character, or trying to keep him short of pocket-money, but simply because he likes to have his own way down to the smallest trifle, and very often his own home happens to be the only place where he has any chance of safely indulging this sentiment.

There is a vast difference among the forms which male egotism assumes. The egotist on a grand scale, who flatters himself that he has discovered the great first principles by which all human conduct ought to be guided, is a far more agreeable person to live with than the fidgety egotist who will insist upon personally regulating the minutest details. The autocracy of an emperor is not often personally vexatious; it is that of the mayor and the sous-préfet which galls the spirit and frets away the life of a nation. So, petty autocrats in private life are always the most mischievous and troublesome. One sees a man, who in public is as humble and unassuming as nature fitted him to be, no sooner get into his own house and with his wife and children, than he undergoes some miraculous process of expansion which transforms him into a portentous combination of Bluebeard and Solon. He is no more like his former self than the beadle before the Board of Guardians is like the same creature bullying paupers in a workhouse. The readiness and authoritative finality of his judgments are only less astounding than the

vast variety of the subjects on which he ventures unhesitatingly to pronounce them, or the implicit reverence with which they are received in the family congregation. His listeners exhibit to its largest extent that "dropping-down-deadness" of manner which, according to Sydney Smith, all bishops require in curates and the incumbents of the smaller livings. They look with awe, as if expecting murder or sudden death, upon the more disinterested stranger who perhaps ventures to disturb the unanimity of approval. Or, which is less pleasant for the stranger, though healthier for the family, possibly the autocracy is one "tempered by epigrams." The solemn saw does not pass unchallenged by subdued sarcasm, and the despot's exactions are not conceded without more or less asperity of protest. The lover of constitutional government looks upon these symptoms of a rising of popular spirit with as much satisfaction as he does upon the right of public meeting and a free press. He knows that the time will come when what the despot hates as insubordination will develop itself into a wholesome spirit of independence and self-reliance. We have known the stronger sort of despot quench this by a downright *coup d'état*. By vigorous measures in the way of banishment or imprisonment, promptly enforced, he has succeeded in reducing his household to the desired state of subjection, making himself the

sole and immediate arbiter of every detail, from the family religion and politics down to the colour of his wife's bonnet strings and the amount of starch that is put in the family linen.

Of the effect of this internal absolutism upon children there can be no doubt. Up to a certain age it is obviously necessary. You cannot entrust babies with clasp-knives. But after this, a man who values the future of his children above the transient and rather poor satisfaction of having his own way at every turn, will not forget that *laisser faire* is in most things as much the prime rule of family government as it is of politics. The maxim has exactly the same force in either case. There are very many things which the family sovereign cannot permit in his subjects any more than the State government permits everything; there are many things which the family sovereign is bound to perform for his subjects just as there are many things which the State can do better than the individual. But what his aim ought to be is as obvious as that of the civil government—to fit them for the transition, which must come, from paternal subjection to independence. And for the fulfilment of this aim the first law is, *Pas trop gouverner.* A wise man with a candid mind soon sees that domestic autocracy is twice-cursed—it curseth him that rules too much, and it curseth them that are too much ruled. It destroys in the

one the proper sense of his exact stature in the scale of the universe, and in the other it crushes out their spirit of self-government and individuality. The character of a family Nero or domestic Dionysius is the very last which one would like to deserve, and it is almost better to run the risk of "crowning the edifice" a little too soon than of gradually contracting into a tame tyrant. Absolutism is always preferable to anarchy, but there is no necessity why a man should either let his family grow up in self-willed and headstrong folly on the one hand, or on the other why he should terrify their souls out of them. Perhaps the most reasonable scheme of the gradual development of infantine liberty is something like this:—First, a stage of minute and intensely centralized despotism, until the subjects have got over the sixth or seventh year of life. Then a monarchy, still absolute, but with a diminution of the centralization, and an extension of the sphere of self-government; epigrams to be tolerated in moderation. After fifteen or sixteen, the monarchy becomes limited, until finally the society becomes republican, and the autocrat assumes the dignified character of guide, philosopher, and friend. Of course the paternal sovereignty is lodged in the hands of two rulers, who may be compared to the Tycoon and the Mikado —the one attending chiefly to temporal, the other to religious affairs.

The same general principles apply to domestic rule from the conjugal point of view. The husband who relieves his wife of every duty in life, who supplies her with views, orders her dinners, and adds up the housekeeping books every week, may bestow an ignoble ease upon her while he lives; but, should he die before her, she is left, as her executors or trustees will discover to their cost, in a condition of helplessness far more disastrous than the trifling squabbles incidental to limited domestic monarchies. Novelists often say that all women like men of the autocratic stamp, and they often pair their heroine with a hero of square jaw, thin lips, resolute mien, and boldly expressed opinions. According to them, the man who hesitates is lost; and nothing is so odious to women as that moderate and balancing temper which in the eye of the philosopher is so laudable. This may be true enough of school-girls and the sillier sort of grown up women, but of the majority it is a sheer superficial calumny. Those who maintain such a theory are deceived by appearances. They find that women listen to the shallow talk of arrogant and positive men without impatience or contradiction, but then they should remember that inexhaustible patience is perhaps the one virtue which above all others the present conditions of their life cannot fail to bring out in women. Of course, if a woman has fallen in love with a man of this stamp,

she will very likely never find out that he is simply a dogmatic blockhead, and may be quite willing to submit to the sternest despotism. But to say that she falls in love with him for the reason that he is dogmatic and despotic is to say that she is out of her mind. Women no doubt get more than their fair share of bullying and snubbing, but it is surely adding insult to injury to pretend to think that they like it.

X.

CULPABILITY AND DEGRADATION.

SOME vehement remarks were made by a public writer a few months ago upon the common institution of Marriage Settlements. Is it not absurd, he said, to take such elaborate precautions against waste of property by the man who is going to marry your daughter, when you cannot prevent him from "debauching her mind," maltreating her person, and inflicting other injuries compared with which the squandering of her money is scarcely an injury at all? On what principle do you refuse to give him uncontrolled rights over her money, when you surrender her mind and her life without a condition? This seems about as reasonable as it would be to complain of the absurdity of bars and bolts and strong boxes, because they do not prevent the rogue from

forging one's name to an acceptance. It is, indeed, impossible to prevent your son-in-law from debauching his wife's mind, whatever so dreadful-sounding a phrase may mean, but surely that furnishes no shadow of a reason why all care should not be taken with reference to injury of a kind which it is possible to prevent. The line of attack adopted with such a tremendous amount of sentimental vigour by this writer upon marriage settlements is exactly parallel to the wider line against social institutions in general, and the attack may be successfully met by the same simple argument in either case. No stringency in the drawing of marriage settlements will ensure virtuous husbands, and no amount of social ordinances framed on the most sentimental principles, and executed with the sternest rigour, will ensure a social organization without flaw or imperfection. We must content ourselves with doing the best we can. French writers are particularly fond of inveighing against society for neglecting to measure with nicety and closeness the various offences committed against its laws. Because the punishments which it inflicts, and the occasions on which it refrains from any punishment at all, do not precisely conform to the requirements of a code of sentiment, the world is violently accused of coldness, injustice, and hypocrisy. We are reproached with visiting some offenders with a severity quite

out of proportion to the turpitude of their offences, whilst others, whose sins are of far greater enormity, are allowed to go scot free, or even treated with respect and adulation. Partiality in the infliction of penalties is aggravated by caprice in the classification of offences. A man who commits adultery is received into society very much as if nothing had happened, but "the wretched partner of his guilt" is subjected to perpetual infamy. A man who insisted on going out to dinner in a shooting coat would speedily cease to be invited, but if he had only committed a cruel and base-hearted seduction his presence would apparently be as acceptable as ever. These people forget that society does not exist for the sole purpose of punishing offences, and that social institutions have not been devised solely with a view to the infliction of a graduated series of penalties. There is no machinery capable of effecting this nice adjustment of guilt and retribution. There are many offences which society cannot reach, and there will always be more or less of rudeness and inaccuracy in the apportionment of punishment.

At the same time, it may well be conceded that the standard of social justice ought constantly to be tending to a loftier elevation, and that the judgments of the invisible tribunal should constantly evince an improved discrimination. The chief obstacle to this gradual improvement is a not

unnatural disposition to confound culpability with general degradation—to infer from single offences a wholesale depravity of character. Jean Valjean, for instance, stole bread to save his sister's children from starvation and death. From this, according to Victor Hugo, society argued, until he died, that he was a violent and malignant ruffian who ought to be hunted down like a beast of prey. Society can only reason on general principles. Burglars, as a class, are violent and malignant, and people have not time to investigate the virtue and benevolence of any particular burglar. They know that he is culpable, and suppose that he is degraded also.

A story—not very healthy, but rather striking from the graceful way in which the writer details the sufferings of a fair penitent—has lately been published in two of the leading periodicals of Paris, from which we may borrow another illustration of this distinction. Madeleine is the closest and best-beloved friend of a simple-minded cousin, Louise. Louise is betrothed to one Robert, whom she has never seen. When at length they meet, Louise becomes, in a simple way, intensely enamoured of Robert, who unfortunately begins to have a preference for Madeleine. At length he discloses his preference to the object of it. Madeleine is in love with Robert too, but in a very high-minded manner, from a sense of duty to

Louise, she repulses him. Robert eventually marries Louise, and Madeleine resolves to cherish a Platonic affection for him. Her sufferings on his marriage are described with unnecessary minuteness, but all goes on pretty well for a time, until by ill-luck the suspicions of Louise's father are aroused, and Madeleine is banished in disgrace. Robert deserts his wife and follows Madeleine, whose Platonism soon gives way. Her conscience stings her through a good many pages, until one night she quits the hotel at Havre, where she and Robert are staying previously to departing for America, finds her way into a church, is tremendously excited by the solemnity of the service and the associations which it arouses, and then learns that the chapel belongs to a Penitentiary. She suddenly resolves to apply for admission, and, leaving Robert to suppose she has drowned herself, enters the Penitentiary and there ends her days. The story is improbable enough, but the writer has taken some pains to depict the horror with which Madeleine regarded her wretched comrades in the Penitentiary, and her consciousness that, though perhaps more culpable, she had not sunk into their depths of degradation.

From this point of view "Le Péché de Madeleine" supplies a good illustration of what we mean. Madeleine had been led by weakness, and betrayed by an unhappy set of circumstances, into

the commission of a sin; but her error was not incompatible with the preservation of supreme disinterestedness, of heroic powers of self-sacrifice, and even of a measure of purity. The world would probably regard her conduct with simple abhorrence, as evidence of a base and corrupt mind. Most people are strongly inclined to think that the steps which lead from one serious fault to general perversion of character have been already traversed when the fault was committed. Theoretically, men have a sort of belief in the possibility of repentance and regeneration, but in practical life they commonly lean to the less generous doctrine that, like horses who have once been down, men and women who have once stumbled are untrustworthy for ever. And, in some respects, experience goes a long way to confirm the practical view. At all events, nobody, except the weakest sort of philanthropist, blames his neighbour for engaging a butler with a good character rather than one whose only credentials are a ticket of leave; nor would anybody in his right mind seek a wife among the ladies who drink tea at St. James's Hall and elsewhere at midnight. Respectability by no means invariably confers a title to be respected, but the lack of it is still further from conferring such a title. The mistake is to suppose that sin against respectability in one point involves a contempt for

its laws in all points, or that weakness of character on one side means weakness all round. Still it is confessedly difficult to recognise the merits of adversaries, and to concede the existence of any good qualities whatever in those of whose conduct in some one respect we strongly disapprove. There is probably no enormity of which the lowest section of the clergy do not think Mr. Jowett and Dr. Colenso to be capable. Their zealous wives would keep a sharp eye upon the spoons in the presence of a man who thought that Moses did not write Genesis, and would be very anxious about the greatcoats and umbrellas in the hall before a disbeliever in the eternity of punishment.

It will naturally be a long time before the majority of mankind can attain that height of magnanimous candour, to reach which is the supreme difficulty of the philosopher. But the tendency is all one way. Unless a return to the dark ages becomes an actual fact, instead of a theme for ingenious speculation, the world will grow more and more reluctant to slay, hip and thigh, all who may show themselves social Amalekites. The fact of being an Amalekite will always go more or less against a man, but it has already ceased to entail utter annihilation. We cannot anticipate the great millennium which would seem to be the object of some philanthropic aspirations, when the commission of a crime or piece

of egregious folly shall be a title to social distinction. Young women who elope with the husbands of their dearest friends will never be likely to find their dear friends very numerous, or their reception in society very hearty. Possibly, as in Madeleine's case, every conceivable condition unites to make their fall inevitable; still society would much rather they did not fall. The attendant circumstances may have been so unfavourable as to reduce the degree of culpability to a minimum; but the outside world, not having time enough to estimate the more or less, will always be apt to infer the maximum of degradation from the minimum of culpability. This is, of course, unjust; but it is less so than sentimentalists would persuade us, for the reason that everybody who deliberately commits the offence is well aware beforehand of the severity of the retribution. There is nothing unforeseen, nothing *ex post facto*, in the punishment. And, again, sentimentalists forget that, though Madeleine is perhaps hardly used, Louise too has a claim to justice—just as they forget, in their horror at the agony of the condemned murderer, the agony to which he condemned his victim. If society deals too leniently with Madeleines, then, by encouraging them, it deals unjustly with the deserted Louises. In our silent sympathy with Valjean, we should not quite forget the baker who had to bear the loss of

the broken window and the stolen loaves. It is, we may confess, very unfortunate that we cannot, while inflicting the necessary punishment upon Madeleine, find some way of recognising her unselfishness, and all the other virtues which her one sin may have left uninjured. But there is no instrument which registers at once the extent of her guilt and the depth of her degradation, so that the world may see at a glance what punishment she merits, and what goodness or capacity for goodness remains in her. As it is, all this has to be done roughly; still, as everybody knows how the process will be performed, the hardship in each individual case is sensibly diminished.

Society, as we have said, can only take general grounds. Up to a certain point, the identification of culpability with degradation is defensible; but the justice of society will have advanced a large step when it learns to treat the two facts apart, and punishes for each culpable act as it arises; or, perhaps we should say, when it allows each culpable act to bring its own punishment, without punishing also for a merely presumed degradation theoretically flowing from the culpable act. The young men, for example, of whom all the world is wont to complain, who outrage society by living in clandestine domesticity, would no doubt be excluded from an immense number of houses on the ground of the degradation of cha-

racter which such a course may be imagined to produce. Yet this clandestine domesticity may really produce nothing of the sort. Apart from any religious grounds, it does a man harm because it consigns him to what is necessarily a somewhat ignoble friendship, and also from the simple fact that society condemns it; for the mere consciousness of being persistently guilty of a distinctly unsocial sin is, to a certain extent, an element of deterioration in one who belongs to a gregarious species. In these two aspects, apart from all other considerations, clandestine domesticity unquestionably exerts a mischievous influence. But it would be contrary to notorious experience to pretend that a proceeding which springs from one source of weakness necessarily weakens every other element of which human character is composed, or involves any profound or universal mental degradation. The wiser people in the world admit the distinction in this and some few other offences. As time goes on, both the class of sins to which it is applied and those who are capable of applying it will grow wider. Meanwhile, the most rigid and undiscriminating of social executioners are not so unreasonable as the wild sentimentalists who virtually ask us, not only to love the sinner who says he repents, but to hate or despise the ninety-nine just persons.

XI.

HUSBANDS.

THE view which a wife takes of the character of her husband is, for obvious reasons, not always identical with that taken by the outside world. We all know cases of women finding every possible excellence in men whom everybody else agrees in pronouncing very silly and very selfish; and, on the other hand, men who commonly pass for everything that is generous and high-souled are often known at home to be full of petty egotisms and unlovable weaknesses. It is a little more curious that in the latter case women, as a rule, do not even wish other people to agree with them. They pour out their complaints into the ears of patient friends, but no sooner does the friend appear to share their convictions about the husband's shortcomings than, as Nancy Lammeter

said, "they turn round and praise him as if they wanted to sell him." They do not so much want sympathy as an opportunity of relieving their feelings, and nobody can become the confidant of a large circle of aggrieved married women who does not thoroughly understand this. Having married with impracticable views, or else with no views at all, about the life which they are entering, they subside, if of a weak temperament, into discontent and uneasiness; or, if possessed of irrepressible natural activity, they find a sufficient outlet for their dissatisfaction in the nursery, or at Dorcas meetings, or in bullying Tractarian or Rationalist curates. The fact that they refuse to allow anybody but themselves to abuse the husband for ceasing to be a lover says much for the general sense of what is due to conjugal honour. And this, after all, is often the sum of a woman's grievances. It would be folly to deny that, even among more refined people than navvies and tramps, there are men who treat their wives with downright cruelty and heartlessness; but if this were other than distinctly exceptional, it would be quite impossible, even with the safety-valve of a Divorce Court, for society to hold together. Less bitter than this, but still intolerable enough, is a husband of an imperious and arrogant temper, who constantly offends his wife and everybody else by insolence and dogmatism.

But by far the larger number of Englishmen are neither cruel nor overbearing. They are, as a rule, properly fond of their wives, and like them to be as happy and comfortable as possible; and the failure in this respect, where there is failure, is principally due to the nonsensical theories which young ladies too often entertain about married life—theories, however, for which they ought not to incur the entire blame. So long as they receive the peculiarly whimsical education which is at present thought good enough for all practical purposes, and are confined—unless they can write novels, or feel a call to practise physic—to the weakest kinds of make-believe activity, we cannot expect them to hold very sound notions about the whole duty of wives. Some philosopher has said that a man finds himself seven years older the day after his marriage. The revolution wrought in the mind of a woman must be still more remarkable. Marriage being the only goal which, in the vast majority of cases, she has ever been taught to look forward to or aim after, whatever discoveries she may make on arriving there produce a proportionately deeper impression upon her than upon the man, as she has fewer other interests. If the anticipated bliss of this state is unfulfilled, then life is vanity indeed. Some women seem to be left stunned and helpless on finding that married life is not a sort of lasting

pic-nic, and pass the remnant of their days in impotent whining. With others, luckily, the instinct of self-preservation and self-respect is too strong for this, and after a short stage of mental blankness they soon grasp the truth, that what they had mistaken for the goal is only the starting-point of a journey that will demand a good many virtues of which hitherto they have only read in Sunday books.

We are not saying that all wives are disappointed in their husbands, and must necessarily fall into one or other of these two classes. Many of them want so exceedingly little in return for their heart and hand that disappointment is almost out of the question. Some, again, are by nature of an affectionate and reverential temper which refuses to see the flaws in anybody to whom they have once fairly attached themselves, and husbands frequently fancy that this is what they have a right to expect. Apart from the question whether they are often likely to get it, it is worth considering how far such mental prostration is profitable either to the idol or the votary. But although everybody may know abundant instances of wives who are profoundly contented with their husbands, we suspect the number of those who find their lords precisely what, before marriage, they supposed them to be, is exceedingly small. It would be a piece of absurd and cynical affectation to say

that the happiness of married life is only a decorous fancy; yet we are tolerably confident that the verdict of almost any twelve candid matrons who could be impanelled would be to the effect that this happiness is of a very different kind from that which they had anticipated, and that the husband is an incredibly different manner of man from the suitor. It would, indeed, be very strange if it were otherwise. When he is in love, a man may think as a child and speak as a child; but, if he is to go on growing, he must put away childish things. In fact, most women would soon begin to complain of a husband who continued to feed them on the barley-sugar which, in its place, had been so exquisitely palatable. Still, the change from barley-sugar to beef and mutton not unfrequently occasions a decided shock to the moral system. A poet or a novelist of the analytic school would find an admirable subject in the working of this change upon a mind fortunately of rare and exceptional sensitiveness, such as one occasionally encounters in real life. The sorrows of men who have been jilted are now a worn-out theme, but the tragedy of a clever and high-minded woman who awakes to find herself mated with a pragmatical ass or downright villain, her powers growing in strength, while his only grow in loudness or wickedness, has yet, in spite of "Romola," to be effectively treated. Imagine the position of

such a woman living with a bad but conceited poet, or with a man who was at war with his kind on the subject of perpetual motion or the quadrature of the circle. Of course she does not tell everybody her wretched secret, and perhaps is herself only alive to it in a half-conscious way. But the marriage is a mistake, for all that.

The most common source of unsuitable matches is plainly the sheer thoughtlessness with which many women marry. The process resembles nothing so much as raffling. Virtually, the whole thing is an affair of accident and chance, and the maiden who "was married one morning as she went into the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit" has too many imitators of her rashness. There are a great many nice questions with reference to the exact duty of parents in preventing matrimonial mistakes on the part of their daughters. Of course, if a girl has set her heart on a groom, or on somebody whom they know to be an unprincipled scamp, her father and mother would be gravely to blame if they did not promptly take every possible step to prevent the marriage. But suppose the favoured suitor is what they call "a very deserving young man," but needy, are they to prohibit the match in the face of the daughter's vehement inclination? Or, a case may arise in which they know nothing against the character or the position of the suitor, but entertain a vague misgiving, an indistinct

prejudice, against him. May this be justly allowed to counterbalance the daughter's deliberate preference? There are a hundred shades of feeling between cordial approbation of a man for a son-in-law, and a repugnance which nothing can overcome; and it is impossible to draw the line at any one point and say, Here the father is justified in withholding his consent. In every case, very much must depend upon the character of the daughter herself. If she is naturally weak and wrongheaded, the exercise of parental authority can hardly be carried too far in order to protect her. But if she has habitually displayed a sound judgment and a solid temper, the question how far a father will be wise in imposing his veto is one which there must be a good deal of practical difficulty in deciding. Something like the following language has been used on the subject of marriage settlements:— "It is evidently very inconsistent for you to have such confidence in a man as to give him your daughter, and yet to impose restrictions on her property which imply that you think it quite possible that he may turn out a very objectionable person after all. You say the settlement is a precaution. But, as a precaution, it is absurdly incomplete. The only complete precaution is the prohibition of the marriage." But surely this is a very off-hand way of meeting the difficulty. It entirely assumes a position which to us appears

wholly untenable — namely, that a father can always with wisdom and justice resort to the extreme exercise of his authority. There are, as we have said, broadly marked cases where he would be bound to exert this authority with the utmost peremptoriness. But we submit that, as a rule, the objection on which the prohibition is founded should be substantial and distinct. The argument to which we refer supposes that a man has only to say, You shall not marry Mr. So-and-so, and then he may immediately subside into a complacent and unquestioning conviction that he has done his whole duty as a British father. Among Orientals and barbarians this is no doubt an extremely satisfactory state of things, but in a country where women do not wrap up their faces and may not, in case of refractoriness, legally be tied up in sacks and thrown into the Thames, this power of despotic prohibition is a matter involving a good deal of responsibility. There may be any number of complex considerations, and, after he has duly weighed them all, the father may still be very gravely puzzled what course to take. We do not suppose that many young women die annually of broken hearts, but it appears not unlikely that as many happy marriages are prevented by the reckless exercise of the right of prohibition as unhappy ones are produced by reckless consent. The unhappiness of a matron

is greatly to be deplored; still the woes of a frustrated spinster ought to count for something. Yet because a father does not think so ill of a man as to run the risk of making his daughter seriously unhappy by thwarting her reasonable inclination, nor so well of his prudence, sagacity, and incorruptible thriftiness as to hand him over ten or twenty thousand pounds without keeping any sort of control over it, he is accused of holding a theory that sons-in-law are in the nature of burglars.

Well, but, it is said, the cause of this cumbrous arrangement of trustees, and parchment, and heavy bills, and so on, is to be found in the common-law principle that a husband becomes absolutely entitled to his wife's personal property and to the profits of her real property during her life, or, under certain circumstances, for his own life. This may be a very mischievous principle, and we are no champions of the common-law doctrines about *femes covertes*. But is it at all probable, if the whole common law were swept away, and every married woman became entitled, as against her husband, to the absolute ownership of all her property, that a father would cease to tie up his daughter's fortune? Would he be one whit more ready to entrust property which, after all, is his own—for this is the case on which we are arguing—to a man who, in spite of all foresight, might be tempted into bad speculations or

improvident living? For though legally it might be made the woman's own property, it is not very difficult to see how it would come, as a matter of fact, to be within the control of the son-in-law. We are not saying that the common-law doctrine is not very insulting to women, and sometimes exceedingly prejudicial to their interests. This is not the question. The father wishes to secure to his daughter and her children certain property, which, be it remembered, is his own, and not theirs. He chooses that she shall have no power to frustrate this intention by diverting his gift to a person whom he may possibly like very much or possibly be quite indifferent to, and he has recourse to the only means by which he can be quite sure that his property will go where he desires that it should go. What has the common-law principle to do with this? He wishes it to go to his daughter, not to his son-in-law; and he knows enough of human nature to be sure that, if left in her power, the husband would be able either to coax or bully her into surrendering it, or to make her life a burden to her for refusing.

We consider the anti-settlement view sentimental, not because its upholders assail the doctrine of the common law, but because, in the substitutes which they propose, they shut their eyes to the actual experience of mankind, and neglect the notorious conditions of married life.

We maintain the question at issue to be, not whether married women should own their property, but whether a father ought so far to adopt his daughter's enthusiastic estimate of her lover as to banish every thought that he ever can become other than immaculate, and to neglect reasonable precautions accordingly. He has seen other marriages which looked just as auspicious end in misery and ruin. Of course, he believes that this will be otherwise, but still there is the chance; and though he cannot protect his daughter from every possibility of being made miserable, he does the best he can. It has been said that marriage-settlements are useful only where the marriage itself was a mistake. It might be replied that they are often the very means of preventing marriages from proving mistakes, because they prevent that estrangement and alienation which could scarcely fail to attend any expression of determination on the wife's part to keep to herself the property which the reformed common-law had conferred upon her. The French system is, no doubt, worthy of investigation, and the machinery of English settlements may be unnecessarily cumbrous and expensive, but we should look suspiciously on any improvements springing from the cool theory that a husband is treated like a housebreaker because he is not allowed to have undisputed control over his father-in-law's money.

XII.

THE COMPANIONS OF OUR PLEASURES.

THE Englishman, being unsocial almost as a matter of duty, very rarely attaches proper weight to the choice of those with whom he does associate. In business, of course, there is no choice. A doctor does not pick his patients, nor a lawyer his clients, nor a tradesman his customers. Solvency is the single test in these matters, and neither the doctor, the lawyer, nor the shopkeeper, makes any inquiry beyond this. Each of them would prefer to have pleasant persons to deal with; but if they are not to be got, he would still not cross their names out of his ledger or fee-book on that account. But of friends, or acquaintances, or companions, we are able to make a deliberate selection out of a more or less circumscribed assortment, and upon the judgment of the choice depends a great deal more

happiness than is generally supposed in a country where, as Novalis said, every man is an island. Few people, if any, either here or in other countries, are so happy as to secure more than one wise and sure friend; and too many never know what it is to have even one. It may be supposed that every married man has at least one such friend, but such a supposition can scarcely exist except in the mind of a guileless celibate with few married acquaintances. A wife is in most cases a sure friend, because, among other reasons, "use doth breed a habit;" but she is not always wise, although a husband scarcely likes to catch himself despising her opinions or silently scouting her counsels. After all, it is only a small and lucky minority who find in their wives anything at all resembling the ideal of friendship. Of course, tenderness and love are very excellent things, but many husbands would be delighted if the wives of their bosoms were rather more like old college friends than they are, and if their tenderness were solidified by rather more judgment.

We know it is a scandalous heresy, and partakes of the nature of brutishness, or even sacrilege, thus to insinuate a base suspicion that supreme felicity sometimes ceases to bless the hearth, or that the angel in the house is sometimes a bore. But we may leave this sore and irritating question to those whom it immediately concerns. It will, at all

events, be conceded that a man's wife is not the most desirable companion he could have at all times and under every circumstance. Nobody wants to have his wife with him in his chambers or at his counting-house. Yet a man is always thought a basely selfish wretch, at least by the female friends of his wife, if he entertains any thought of enjoying himself out of her society. She readily and properly leaves him to make money after his own fashion, but in the spending of it she would fain be supreme; and, at any rate, that it should be spent without her companionship is utterly intolerable. In the main, and in favourable cases, a wife is a sufficiently agreeable companion of her lord's leisure hours, provided she has sense enough to throw the children's boots, and coughs, and teeth off her mind; but there are occasions when a man will get more real enjoyment for himself, and confer more upon her, if they are allowed to pursue pleasure after their respective tastes.

In travelling, for example, except in the case of newly married couples, a man and his family do not commonly give much mutual satisfaction. Travelling has the most extraordinary effects upon some people. It makes them very fractious; or they become frozen up like a snail in its shell, and answer in vacant monosyllables; or they rise into a state of comfortable and complacent be-

wilderment; while many foolish persons are seized with an irresistible desire, upon entering a railway carriage, to delude their fellow-passengers, by an assumed air of mysterious importance, into the belief that they are people of consequence. Any weak conduct of this kind—whether in the lady whom you have sworn to love and cherish, or in the gentleman whom you are bound to love, honour, and obey—is calculated to inspire a peculiar sort of disgust essentially hostile to all pleasure. Men fly into undignified rages with the waiter, and women get flustered and helpless. Again, a man has an awkward way of storming furiously about extortionate hotel bills, and as his spouse often tells him, at the moment when his blood is most up, that she wonders at him, they spend the day in a condition of profound sulk, not by any means contemplated when the tour was planned. Irritation is inseparable from travelling, especially on the Continent, where the language and money are unfamiliar, and it is a dubious advantage to have with you a person upon whom it is a prerogative to expend that irritation. The reason why people persist in a system of the failure of which they are mournfully conscious is probably the same as that which moved John Gilpin:

> How all the folks would stare,
> If I should dine at Edmonton,
> And wife should dine at Ware.

In nine cases out of ten, it is a dire mistake to throw a husband and wife together for a month or six weeks, with nothing to do beyond trying to enjoy themselves, and without abundance of other companionship. The most sensible plan, no doubt, where it is practicable, is that at least two pairs should unite to form one society for travelling purposes. Repugnant as the idea of any sort of companionship out of their own families is to Englishmen at large, the advantages of the plan are becoming every year more widely recognised. It is pleasanter to smoke an after-dinner cigar with a congenial male friend than alone, or with strangers. It is pleasanter to have three or five nice people to talk to over dinner than one, even though that one be your own wife. Again, a man cannot storm very violently about the bill in the presence of his neighbour's wife, and half the consciousness of extortion vanishes in the fact of his neighbour suffering as much as himself. Perhaps the greatest advantage of all is, that, on the one system, a husband is forced to forego many excursions because his wife would either suffer unreasonable fatigue if she accompanied him, or be forced to pass many hours in loneliness if he went without her; while, on the other, distinct modes of enjoyment can be organized for each element of the party. Pleasure trips managed on this principle are seldom failures, provided that ordi-

nary tact and judgment have been employed in inviting companions. Most people have taken part in one or two such excursions in the course of a life, and they generally look back upon them with sentiments of unmixed satisfaction. If men would reflect what a spring to increased exertion, and what a refreshment in the midst of hard and dreary work, the retrospect of one genuinely free and happy holiday always remains, they would be more thoughtful and more original in devising means for making such holidays frequent. And almost everything depends upon those whom we make our companions in them.

But every pleasure-seeker is not married; and if he be, he may have come to an equitable arrangement with his wife that she should go down to Brighton with the children while he may take his pleasure *en garçon* wherever he lists. Yet even here success is far from certain, perhaps even far from common. University men often make quite as great blunders in choosing a travelling companion as an ill-matched couple. They argue, because a man is an agreeable friend at Oxford, that he cannot develop into anything disagreeable when surrounded by a quite different set of conditions. It requires an amount of experience which a young man at the university has not had time to acquire, to know that agreeable people do not always wear well. Where, as at

Oxford and Cambridge, there is not much scope for a very wide divergence between two men who agree in one or both of the two fundamental points of liking hard intellectual work, and of liking or disliking hard physical exertion, companionships are close and abundant. But, in the world, the points of divergence which present themselves are so innumerable, and circumstances so constantly not only tempt but necessitate divergence, that a perfectly satisfactory companion is rarely met with.

And this is the real reason why the pleasures of middle age seem so faded and heavy when we remember those of youth. The middle-aged man is burdened with an accumulation of cares, it is true, but the young undergraduate has cares which burden him quite as heavily. Some middle-aged men, too, have had the freshness of life blunted by absorbing cynical fallacies; yet in this respect the young man who has seen nothing of the world is generally far more of a cynic than his father. But when the lad goes in search of pleasure, he is accompanied by a crowd of others who think and feel just as he does. The consciousness of a common aim, with no lurking differences, is more exhilarating than wine or the possession of money. As soon, however, as an opportunity is given for the full expansion of individual tastes, companionships which depend on the unanimity of youth cannot but fall asunder. This revelation

is often made in Long Vacation tours, which found two young graduates firm friends for life, and left them something like enemies. Little traits of selfishness peep out which the luxurious facilities of university life had naturally never evoked. An unamiable parsimony, or a spirit of stupid extravagance, or a lack of broad sympathy, may all make their appearance above the surface, and provoke dislike or contempt. In short, the man whom it was very delightful to meet for three or four hours a day, at dinner and over wine in the common-room, may become little less than a nuisance when there are discomforts to be borne, fatigues to be endured, differences of taste to be tolerated, and mutual concessions to be made in determining a route or prolonging a visit.

A great many clever and likeable men seem to demand a certain amount of solitude; deprived of which, as they must be more or less when travelling, they become as fractious or as dull as if they had not had enough sleep. Some, again, shine only in a *tête-à-tête*, and, when other friends are present, seem to fall into a strange kind of moodiness, as if neglected or wronged. But the most trying of all companions is one in whom travelling breeds a disposition to disparage and sneer at everything he sees—who persists in looking only at the weak side of foreign institutions and foreign character, and who never loses an opportunity of

setting up unfavourable comparisons and vaunting something that is somewhere else. There is something peculiarly provoking in such a temperament, and nothing can be more utterly fatal to enjoyment than to have to visit fine churches, admire great paintings, and gaze upon sublime or beautiful landscapes, in the company of a carping critic of this kind. And it is impossible to take sure precautions against joining a companion who may turn peevish, or moody, or unsympathetic. The changed circumstances among which travel naturally throws him may make him as different as possible from his usual self. When Gray set out to travel with Horace Walpole, he never dreamt that he would have to cut him in a few weeks for surreptitiously opening other people's letters. We never can be quite sure how a man will stand the test of travelling companionship until we have tried him; and, unluckily, the duration and arrangements of life do not allow us to make very many experiments, in case the first one or two should fail.

For different sorts of pleasures it is obviously desirable to choose different companions. One whom we might ask, in Milton's phrase, when the fields are dank and ways are mire, to help waste a sullen day over a neat repast, choice wines, and music, might be a dull companion on a walking tour—just as a young fellow who was the

life of a Christmas party in a country house might be dreadfully in the way if you were giving an "æsthetic" dinner to one or two philosophers. No positive or universal rule can be laid down, but it is certainly a mistake to make a walking tour with anybody with whom you are not sufficiently intimate to go two or three miles, if so minded, without speaking a word. Neither is it good to choose a man simply because he possesses great knowledge and a sagacious judgment, for if he has not more than this he will be, to borrow Steele's illustration, like one who has his pockets full of gold, but wants change for ordinary occasions. The best companion, for most purposes and on most occasions, is he who has both the gold and much small change as well. But such men are rare.

Perhaps even there is something providential in this, and in the scantiness of real enjoyment which so commonly attends our most deliberately laid schemes for obtaining it. Nearly everybody has a small stock of reminiscences of past delights, of certain days or weeks, jovial and rollicking or placidly delicious, enjoyed with genial men or kindly maidens—times that recur ever and again to the memory, and which we should be glad to live over again. But retrospect, even of pleasures like these, soon begins, after a certain stage of the road has been passed, to have its pains. The

halo that surrounds the recollection of the joys of home grows dim when the old gray father and mother have been laid to rest under the yews. It is terribly dismal to sit in the old room at college, or walk along the same road in some foreign country, in which you sat or along which you walked twenty years ago with glorious fellows now dead, or two thousand miles off, or metamorphosed into prigs and pedants. The pains of memory are a commonplace, but the recollection that past happiness is apt in time to beget pain may soothe people whose attempts at pleasure are generally abortive; while the counter-reflection that, for a very long time, and in some instances for ever, the reminiscences of pleasant holidays with thoroughly congenial companions are among the most serene of human delights may serve to stimulate them to fresh endeavours in the same direction.

XIII.

CLEVER MEN'S WIVES.

THE supreme difficulty in the achievement of a successful dinner-party is commonly thought, and with justice, to lie in the judicious assortment of the male and female guests. There are some houses where this difficulty is always surmounted, and there are others where it is as uniformly fatal. No small portion of the anguish generally characteristic of the ten minutes before the announcement of dinner may be traced to this source, and a man can scarcely enjoy much tranquillity at a moment when he is anticipating his doom in the shape of a contemptuous dowager or an obviously insipid miss. The want of judgment displayed on these so-called festive occasions by a reckless or superficial-minded host is one of the gravest of social offences. People reasonably feel that they have a right

to demand at least as much trouble from their entertainer as is bestowed by the proprietor of a happy family on the fitting accommodation of his *protégés*. If Mr. Wombwell had placed the pelican of the wilderness in the same cage with the lion, or the bear from the North Pole with the tiger from Bengal, the result in itself would have been an adequate punishment for his temerity or folly. Unhappily, it is not practicable to inflict a well-deserved vengeance upon the man who has condemned you to a penal servitude of some three hours with a feeble being who takes interest in nothing under the sun, and whom no topic can rouse into decent animation. The mental state of the victim, when first consigned to the tender mercies of a vapid partner, is a compound of the two most agonizing feelings recorded in the history of Robinson Crusoe—his desolation when he saw ships sail by in the offing unobservant of his signals, and his profound horror on first perceiving the preparations for the repast of the cannibals. The purgatory which awaits him is mournfully familiar to the diner-out. There are a few social salamanders who regard the ordeal with equanimity, and who pass through it with a curiously intrepid self-possession; but, to most people, this companionship, into which a hospitable fiend has forced them, is a source of genuine distress. And this is aggravated by the consciousness that there

are others to whom "the cup has been dealt in another measure." Somebody whom you know to be sprightly and appreciative has been told off with somebody else whom you know to be dull and egotistical. Mr. Snodgrass is directed to offer his arm to Becky Sharp, while Warrington is made over to "Mr. F.'s aunt," who makes oracular and detached statements, such as that "her uncle George's mill was burnt down," or "there's milestones on the Dover road." If the intelligent man is harassed by the vapid woman, not less provoked is the clever woman by a flippant man. Everything goes wrong, and the whole affair collapses in a mixture of surly despair and quiet resignation, simply because the guests were not properly sorted, the fool with the fool, and the clever woman with the clever man, each after their kind.

Poets have often compared life to a banquet, and, in truth, the companionships of life are frequently not less incongruous than those of a banquet; but there is one consideration which must manifestly overthrow any argument drawn from one to the other. The most tedious dinner-party with which inhuman host ever vexed the souls of human guests never failed to come to an end. The principle of assortment which ensures success in unions for two or three hours may be less applicable to others which last ten or twenty times as many years. The popular notion, how-

ever, seems to be that it is equally appropriate in either case. There can be no doubt that at a dinner-party the most delightful partner for a clever man is a clever woman; and people are generally inclined to think that the clever woman will be equally delightful to him at his own table all the year round. Theoretically, this appears to be the sound view. When a thoughtful or learned man mates himself with a gushing creature without two ideas in her head, it is natural to exclaim, how much happier he would have been with somebody as learned and laborious as himself. Or when a refined and sentimental friend, full of generous schemes and airy aspirations, marries a woman who proves "a good wife to him"—in other words, who looks carefully after his children and his shirt-buttons—it is reasonable to sigh over his unworthy fate. Or, the object of sympathy may be a man who takes an eager interest and an active part in public affairs, but whose wife is like the "cold, silly female fool" mentioned by De Tocqueville, who ran out of the room whenever Bonaparte came in, "because he was always talking his tiresome politics." All these appear at the first glance to be sheer matrimonial mistakes. It is the wearisome dinner-party over again, only with the material difference that the dessert never comes and the ladies never withdraw. But our pity for these seemingly ill-mated couples may,

after all, be wholly unnecessary. Is it, as a matter of fact, generally to be desired that all the clever men should pair off with all the clever women, and leave the dullards and that large section which is neither dull nor clever to act on the same principle? History does not much help us. There have been illustrious men who found bliss in wives of their own mental stature; but there have been as many others who got on admirably well with fools; and, lastly, there has been a brilliant class who preferred to eschew female alliances altogether. Some few have enjoyed the good fortune of David Copperfield, and, being providentially relieved of the fool, have rushed into the arms of common sense. But from the nature of the case this must be a rare privilege, and when you have once made the silly Dora your own, it is too much to expect that a timely consumption will prevent her from long continuing so, in order that you may turn experience to account by marrying Agnes.

A clever man, like anybody else, may marry a clever woman, a merely sensible woman, a fool, or an echo. Of these four varieties of wives, the last is unquestionably the least to be coveted. Habitual fractiousness is a decided drawback in the partner of one's joys, and flippancy or frivolity is not always congenial; but neither a fractious woman nor a flippant woman can do a husband any serious harm, though they may be exceedingly

unpleasant at the time. It is different when he awakes to find himself married to his shadow—to a woman who may have been accomplished and even slightly thoughtful, but who is so weakly endowed with individuality that before they have been married three months she has sunk into a mere echo of himself. Originally, perhaps, she was able to pronounce opinions worth listening to, and which he was glad to have, but all her powers have fled before his superiority like a badly fixed photograph before the sun. From being a stimulant she has degenerated into a sheer absorbent. He married in the hopes of finding a sort of "guide, philosopher, and friend," and discovers that, after all, he has only doubled himself. Once she might have been to him, in Mr. Tennyson's words, "as water is to wine," and the result of the combination bears a natural resemblance to their detestable compound—negus.

The fact is that a clever man, more than all others, requires a slightly acidulous element in his companion. All clever men are more or less infected with vanity. It may be blatant and offensive, it may be excessive but not unamusing, or it may show itself just as a bare flavour, but it is never entirely absent, and needs to be counteracted by something much more potent than a hot and sugary intellectual negus. A clever husband, like the good despot, will be all the better for a little con-

stitutional opposition. If his most constant companion is ever flattering, ever kind, his natural share of self-love is sure to grow both unhealthily large in quantity, and unworthily little in quality. The height of domestic felicity would not probably be attained by a man whose wife could set him right in a Greek quotation, or oppose his views about Hebrew points, or thwart him in his theory of the origin of evil; but still less where he is never treated to an occasional dose of wholesome and vigorous dissent, and is allowed to make assertions and advance opinions without fear of criticism or chance of opposition. Solitude tends to make a man think a great deal too highly of himself, but this half solitude is still worse, where he only sees his own mental shadow and hears his own mental echo. Of course, in many marriages, the wife is no more a companion to her husband than his housekeeper or his cook; and there may be no more genuine intercourse between them than is implied by two men going into partnership in business. In such cases mental qualities are not of much importance. A head equal to the arithmetic of weekly bills, and a heart that does not quail before the emergencies of the nursery, are amply sufficient to answer all purposes. But where a man makes a companion of his wife, the variety of woman that he selects palpably makes a great difference, not solely in external

comfort, but in maintaining the vigour of his own character.

It is remarkable that the conditions which prevent a man from ever appearing a hero to his valet should not operate equally in the case of his wife. He probably has less insight into his wife's foibles than her maid, because what it is the fashion to call the "inner life" of woman is like her apparel, infinitely more complex than that of the ordinary run of men. But a wife, although she does not shave him, and brushes neither his hair nor his clothes, generally knows more of her husband's character than his valet, and the domestic hero-worship flourishes notwithstanding. A dull blockhead, who is notorious among his acquaintances for stupidity and folly, appears to his faithful spouse an archangel in the house. And with a clever man the case is far worse, for the blockhead, in spite of the enfolding fumes of domestic incense, never quite loses the suspicion that other men think him a fool, and that his wife is rather a fool for thinking him anything else. But a clever man does not, to begin with, underrate his own powers; and, conscious that there is some foundation for the conjugal idolatry, he magnifies this foundation into something like ten thousand times its actual dimensions. If his wife is clever, too, the ill is aggravated still further, and he exaggerates his intellect to a still

greater extent on a kind of *laudari ab laudato* principle. A clever man will really find it worth while to reflect whether it is not better for him to marry a downright fool than a mere petticoated edition of himself, unrevised and uncorrected, with all the original flaws faithfully reproduced.

A man of genius dedicated his novel to "the most severe of critics, but—a perfect wife." Perhaps the "but" might be appropriately replaced by "because." At least, no wife is perfect who cannot be a severe critic upon occasion. To a very clever man perhaps it is the most considerable of her functions. If his cleverness lies in the region of romance or poetry, and more especially if he loves to air it in public, it is difficult to conceive a more thoroughly useful domestic institution than a sternly critical wife. Hence it may be argued that the clever man must pair off with the clever woman, for otherwise how should she be competent to criticize him? Unless he selects somebody as good as himself, the only criticism he is likely to encounter will come in the form of Caudle lectures and hateful wrangles. But this is just the same sort of mistake as people make who sneer at journalists for reviewing books they could not write, or commenting upon campaigns they could not have conducted. The fallacy has been so frequently refuted in the latter case that we need scarcely repeat the arguments against its employ-

ment in the former. A woman may be quite unable to originate, and yet very competent to pass an intelligent judgment upon what has been originated by somebody else in whom she is interested.

However, it is obviously as impossible to generalize about the sort of woman whom clever men would do well to marry as it would be to prescribe what kind of things clever men should eat for dinner. Some would be happiest with babies like poor Harriet Shelley, the chief source of whose nuptial joy was that "the house had such a nice garden for her and Percy to play in." Others, like Voltaire or D'Alembert, would be better pleased with women like Madame du Chatelet or Mdlle. L'Espinasse, who could solve abstruse astronomical problems, and write treatises on fluxions. Perhaps the majority of clever men are well contented with wives as like mothers as possible. But if it is impossible to lay down any more definite rule, the clever man may at all events be warned to marry somebody else, and not himself in another form.

XIV.

NEW IDEAS.

NOBODY with any pretence to enlightenment or to a liberal and open judgment would be likely to maintain that a sort of finality has been reached in social arrangements. We all are constrained by a feeling of intellectual decency to admit, in theory at all events, that the birth and diffusion of a constant succession of new and even startling ideas are an essential condition of any society which is to escape stagnation. But of those who most cordially avow their belief in this doctrine of progress only a very small proportion are habitually ready to give a fair hearing to new ideas. That novelty which in theory is their prime merit is in practice their most fatal defect. The difficulty with which a new idea makes any way in the world is sufficiently notorious, but the blame of

this is, we fancy, too exclusively laid upon the confessed blockheads of society. The simple theory of a great modern writer, that "most people" are fools, is scarcely an adequate explanation of the stubborn resistance which every new notion has to encounter; for the majority of fools are decently tractable if they are judiciously managed. Otherwise it is plain that the world would speedily come to a stand-still. The fault lies more in the managers and leaders than in the flock. At first sight it seems a monstrous paradox to say that wise men keep the world back more than foolish and un-idea'd men. But there is an amount of truth in it, as in most paradoxes, which is very well worth considering. Put in another form, it means that the people who withstand all new projects must at least have brains enough to see their weak points. The mere force of the dead-weight and inert opposition of folly is not so formidable as the hostility of those who pass for wise, and in many respects are wise. Let us take an instance. Everybody now-a-days would admit that the idea of the Bridgewater canal a hundred years ago was one of the most obvious excellence. The fools would doubtless have thought so then, if they had been left alone. But men with a capacity for thinking and arguing were required to discover and put forward a series of conclusive reasons why the proposed scheme should imme-

diately be set aside. The canals would cause a serious falling-off in the breed of that noble animal, the draught-horse. They would entail the sinking of enormous sums of money, and so, by diminishing the circulating capital, would cripple the trade of the country. They would be the means of withdrawing a great deal of land from cultivation. They would cause the natural navigation of rivers to be neglected. Lastly, they would affect the coasting-trade, and so the supply of British seamen for the navy would be impaired. A fool could never have found out all this. And, moreover, when so many good arguments had been found out and duly exhibited in controversial array, a wise man might very well have been taken in by them as thoroughly as if he were a fool.

The truth seems to be that there is no valuable scheme in the world, and never will be one, against which you cannot have at least one really good argument. This good argument is quite enough to outweigh for a very long time all the arguments which may appear on the other side, because it has behind it all the force of the cautious and wary temper which often is, but much oftener is not, true sagacity. People may say we are wiser now than they were a hundred years ago, but it is only thirteen years since one of the very arguments that had been used against canals

was strongly urged against the conveyance of coals by rail from the Northumberland pits. Railway conveyance would damage the coasting trade; therefore it would affect the training of seamen; therefore it would destroy the efficiency of our men-of-war; therefore Britannia would at once cease to rule the waves. What man with a spark of patriotism in his bosom, after this had been pointed out to him, could support a measure thus plainly big with the ruin of his native land? The history of every measure of advance and improvement is the same in the first instance. Although it is only by the infusion of new ideas that existing evils and inconveniences can ever be removed, there is nothing, as a rule, so chillingly greeted on its first enunciation. And the cool reception is not found merely at the hands of those simple souls who, in a living statesman's phrase, lie on their backs all day and indiscriminately bawl out "Fudge." Harvey never could get anybody over forty years of age to believe in his discovery of the circulation of the blood. But it would be rash to suppose that everybody over forty is a fool. That, indeed, is the point at which the proverb has fixed the maturity of wisdom. Still a person may have a great deal of wisdom, and yet be very reluctant to believe, against all past traditions, that the blood goes through his body in what seems a strange and circuitous fashion. It would

be wrong to suppose even that all of the people who insist on making Sunday a day of gloom are incapable of forming a sound judgment, or of measuring, in a more or less rude way, the relative merits of conflicting arguments. The notion that Sunday should be a day of extra happiness and of genuine relief from sordid cares is comparatively new, and therefore it is odious.

It is not till a new idea has become very old to a few that it has any chance of being weighed or examined by the men of second-rate wisdom who are the guides of the many. Though these men of second-rate wisdom would make indignant protests if they were accused of narrow and unfruitful tendencies, they literally never give a hearing to a new idea while it is new. For example, Mr. Mill's recent articles on the later speculations of Comte have attracted attention to some of that philosopher's strangest fancies, from people who would not have taken the trouble to dig them out of the original book. It was highly amusing to notice the way in which, both in the press and in private conversation, Comte's ideas were disposed of. One writer said that Mr. Mill had finally and for ever done for M. Comte's pretensions—a result, we are quite sure, which would surprise and embarrass nobody more than Mr. Mill himself. Others laughed merrily over the Comtian crotchets, and many of them are laughable enough. But the

thing to be complained of was that the people laughed at the mere sound of the crotchets before they had taken the trouble to see whether there was anything good in them or not, or whether, in fact, they were crotchets. It is this hatred of everything which is new and strange, and which therefore is sure to *sound* droll, that keeps us back.

There can be no doubt that, of the new ideas which come to the birth, a vast majority would, after inquiry made, be wisely rejected as unfit for application in practical business. But this is a very poor reason for assuming that it is a mistake and a waste of time to make the inquiry. With reference to new ideas, men go upon that hardening principle which foolish persons pursue in rearing children. They expose their young ones to all manner of hardships by way of strengthening them, and think that their point is gained if, out of a large family, they can show you one survivor with exceptional strength and health and powers of endurance. The others, unfortunately, have perished in the process. In the same way, a great many people, who by no means deserve to be classed among the foolish ones of the earth, think that to neglect or insult and snub a new idea is the proper way of testing its worth. Such treatment, they suppose, hardens and strengthens it into a condition fit for use in this rough world. True, there may be ideas so delicate as to sink under the

hardening treatment. Nobody can tell how much they might have benefited society if they had been properly tended and decently encouraged by the very class who most constantly avow their sense of both the need and the means of improvement. Somehow, their professed affection for new ideas in the abstract gets changed into downright hatred as soon as any particular and given new idea presents itself for their sponsorship. What has been nominally the object of prolonged parental yearning no sooner appears than it at once receives worse than a step-child's portion.

Besides the obstacle which the mass of indolence always opposes to the fair reception of novelties, as much at one time as another, there may be said perhaps to be two hostile influences especially prevalent in the present day. First, there is the amiable cynicism which is so dear to a large portion of modern youth, and which is constantly sending them to the radical question, What's the good? with the conviction that anybody who professes to answer it encouragingly is either an interested hypocrite or else a pitiful enthusiast, which is almost worse. Perhaps it is very delightful to go through the world in this frame of mind —very careful of oneself, gloriously indifferent to everybody else, thinking virtue a dull pretence, and looking on industry as a curse to those who cannot exist without it, and an idiotic blunder in

those who can, but do not choose. Still, men of this temper cannot be expected to betray much ardour for new ideas. What is the good? Why should they? What will new ideas do for them? A man whose simple wants and hopes and aspirations are summed up in a good club, one or two congenial friends, a portable edition of Balzac's novels, and a moderate competency, is not likely to be affected very seriously by anything which only concerns the unimportant portion of the race outside of himself. He does not scout new ideas, nor denounce those who broach them, nor get angry over them. He only views them with a steady indifference, a profound imperturbability, which is truly amazing and admirable. His single weakness indicative of our common humanity is a sentiment of pity for those who have spent their time in working out ideas, when so very little is gained by them even of what foolish mortals call pleasure. Yet these simple-minded creatures are not fools intellectually. They can argue, negatively, as well as their betters. They have often read a good deal and travelled a good deal. There are various causes for the wonderful prevalence of such a temper. We need not enter into them here. But it is worth remembering that the born dolt is not the greatest difficulty with which a new idea has to contend.

Next to the influence of those who think the

world and life, and so on, a poor sort of affair, comes the influence of the larger class who think that the world does best of itself without much active interference from us. These people are quite sure that one age is better than another. But they suppose, it would appear, that each improvement springs up in a night, like Aladdin's palace, at the bidding of mysterious and super-human genies. It is not worth while for them to make any fuss about new ideas. They have got railways and the penny post, and the right of private judgment, and *habeas corpus*, and all their other good things, without a fuss; and do doubt a hundred years hence there will be a great many more good things which we have not. They are charmingly unconscious of the process by which happiness is increased. They know that there is some such process, and they are very glad to know it. The notion never occurs to them that the whole process consists in as many people as possible keeping their minds on the alert for new ideas, and then instantly putting their shoulders to the wheel for testing them and carrying them into practice. Progress is very far from being of the nature of an automaton. It wants human agents to keep it at work. The blunder of personifying Progress, and investing it with the qualities of a triumphant god who goes on his way irrespectively of what men can do unto him, is as injurious to

the reception of new ideas as any amount of pococurantism, and is just as common among people who have a reputation for ability and attainments. What with these two, and what with the ignorant, and the people with sinister interests, and those who are too much occupied in winning daily bread to think of anything else, a new idea has rather a hard time of it, in spite of the nineteenth century and its unspeakable glories.

XV.

CYNICAL FALLACIES.

THAT union of the sickliest sentimentality with the coarsest cynicism which is characteristic of Young France is nowhere more strikingly brought out than in one of the stories of the younger Dumas which has long enjoyed a supreme popularity among the artists and students of Paris. Antonine, a beautiful girl, who gives her name to the book, is the daughter of a physician. Edward, or Arthur, or Alphonse—we forget which—catches a glimpse of her ankle one muddy day in the Rue de Rivoli, and forthwith tumbles into a frantic ecstacy of love. He cannot eat, nor sleep, nor read. He is consumed with fever; he raves all day and cries all night; he looks ghastly; "*il est souffrant*," which seems to be the appropriate phrase for the climax of this kind of agony. After a time, he

discovers the residence of Antonine's father, and calls upon him on the pretence of seeking his professional advice. Antonine has been peeping through the parlour blinds, and on his departure asks her father if the young man is ill. "My child," is the reply, "this day twelve months the young man will be dead." Antonine, who is deeply in love with Edward or Alphonse, swoons away at this, while the physician weeps copiously. It appears, however, that there is a certain system for curing consumption, which is Edward's malady; but it is one requiring the most tender and incessant vigilance on the part of the nurse. The rest follows. Antonine devotes herself to his cure, and without delay marries the consumptive suitor. Then the action of the story really begins. The reader will be at no loss to imagine the situation, and the elaborate and minute expansion which it will receive at the hands of the author of "La Dame aux Camlias" and "La Dame aux Perles." Two young lovers in a state of frantic mutual passion, heightened by the consciousness that their fiery bliss may be quenched within twelve months, and one of them supposed to be slowly wasting away in consumption—what more could be desired by any writer or reader of this school of fiction? The medical details, now so indispensable alike to the boudoirs of the Champs Elysées and the dirty garrets of the Quartier Latin, are carefully enume-

rated. We may leave our readers to conjecture the quantity of blood-spitting and the amount of passionate raving, and the loathsome artistic product which results from their combined representation. Suffice it to say, that this is protracted through a whole volume, and that at last Edward is carried safely through the crisis by means of the heroic devotion of Antonine. This is the end of the story proper, but the sting lies in l'Envoi. The reader is supposed to be worked up to a tremendous pitch of sympathy with the sufferings of Edward and Antonine, and to be left happy in the contemplation of their future bliss, when his dream is dispelled in some such style (we quote from memory) as the following: "Reader, do you really want me to tell you what became of them? I would much rather leave it unknown. It would be better for you, perhaps, not to know. But, after all, art is truth, &c., &c. Well, Edward is filling some small post in a provincial town, and has grown fat. He is now engaged in an intrigue with the wife of the Prefect. Antonine knows all about it, and laughs heartily."

It is difficult to recall anything more deeply cynical than the laugh with which we are dismissed. The author plainly flings his moral at mankind as the sum and conclusion of all human philosophy, and implies that anybody who thinks otherwise must either be a romantic young fool or

a hypocritical old one. There is probably not very much danger that either the objectionable art or still more objectionable philosophy of M. Dumas *fils* will ever become naturalized in this country. But the moral of "Antonine" illustrates a part of that philosophy which may be occasionally observed, though never very loudly expressed, among younger people even in England. Neither cynicism nor the cognate vice of adherence to the principle of *nil admirari* is at all congenial to the English character. We are too thriving, and enjoy too varied and extensive a sphere of activity —literary, commercial, and, above all, political— to be ready to adopt a theory which would render all our prosperity a mere hollow nut, and would teach us that our activity, though very well as a means of getting through time and securing a certain measure of bodily comfort, is at bottom nothing higher or better than a fashionable remedy for ennui. Most young Englishmen are too athletic and too robust in body to appreciate the cherished creed of the dyspeptic denizens of the Quartier Latin, who live poorly, who drink much unwholesome wine and eat much unripe or stale fruit, and to whom the morning plunge is either unknown or terrible. And young Englishwomen, though perhaps curtailed in their modes of activity to a greater extent than is salutary, are preserved by the example of their brothers, if by

nothing else, from sinking into the hopelessness implied in the reception of the wizened philosophy which finds such favour among the more immured maidens of France.

But, for all this, anybody who is familiar with the talk of the older under-graduates or younger dons at the universities cannot fail to have been struck with the appearance now and again of this spiteful valuation of the world, its gifts, and its enjoyments. It may be detected at the junior tables in the great dining-halls of the Inns of Courts, and is not wholly absent even from the examination rooms of the Bishops. It is, in truth, one way of interpreting facts which are tolerably patent to everybody who attempts anything like a survey of life and its prospects. But it results in a superficial and fallacious interpretation, although one that is peculiarly likely to become popular, if only for a time, at an epoch like the present, when some of the traditional renderings and glosses, and some of the old consolations, are being more or less finally removed. The vicissitudes of life are an obvious and inexhaustible theme for speculation and moralizing. They offer a variety of morals depending upon the attitude in which they are approached. Most people, like Hamlet, leave the moral uninferred, and gratify a speculative sentiment by pondering and wondering, without pro-

ceeding to construct a whole theory of life upon it. The crash of the people next door is as good a text for them as Yorick's skull was for the Prince of Denmark. They think of Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay, stopping a hole to keep the wind away, or of Beau Brummel, or of the great Railway Director, once the god of lords and bishops, in sordid lodgings at Boulogne. But they are sober-minded enough to shun all rash generalization, or at least do not go beyond the conventional *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Everybody is conscious of the irony of fortune on a less heroic scale than Julius Cæsar or Beau Brummel. Many a stout matron who now spends her evenings in playing jigs on the piano to amuse a horde of children, while her husband is smoking his cigar among the horses and pigs, used twenty years ago to distend herself with all sorts of high resolves and lofty aspirations and noble views over the sonatas of Beethoven. The man whom you remembered at college as ranting Carlyle and Emerson by the volume, and repeating all manner of high ineffable phrases, with a great deal more sound than substance, about the infinity of life and the eternity of labour and the healing doctrine of sorrow-worship, is now whipping grammar into little boys who make faces behind his back, or perhaps is carrying out his doctrine of renunciation and worshipping sorrow by means of

a fine house, a cellar of choice wines, and a good cook. In such cases as these, the irony of fortune is no more than the collapse of transcendentalism, and has its origin in the simple operation of ordinary causes. Commencing life with theories only fit for a world of angels and shadows, these people have been forced to throw them overboard on encountering a world of men and substances. Perhaps the most remarkable of such collapses has taken place on a large scale in our own time in the case of the disciples of St. Simon, by far the most extraordinary of modern enthusiasts. Enfantin, their leader, was the prince of fanatical mystics. He advanced pretensions of the most extravagant kind, but which, notwithstanding, were fully acknowledged by men who have since become eminent in letters and politics and trade. He held direct communication with heaven. He was the Free Man; and as soon as they could discover the Free Woman, the regeneration of the world would immediately commence, and the new religion would spread over the globe. He induced men to give up all they had to follow him; he prescribed rules of life, costume, and worship, which were implicitly received by ardent followers; he was persecuted by the Parisians, who laughed at the strange dresses and habits of the new order, and he was prosecuted by the French authorities, who detest all apostles. Men actually went to

Egypt and Syria in search of the Free Woman, but in vain; and at this moment Enfantin, after sorting letters and selling stamps as the postmaster of a provincial town, is an official on the Lyons railway.*

Facts like these—and they abound in life, though under less extraordinary conditions—if looked at in a certain light, may indeed tempt a man into cynicism and the pleasant conviction that everything in the universe is hollow and a snare. But then the light is not that of plain reason or common sense. He arrives at this conviction because he has taken the first and easiest generalization which the facts appear to suggest. It may assume various forms. If the observer is constitutionally or by habit of a dyspeptic and irreligious temperament, he becomes a cynic. If he is constitutionally devout, he turns either anchorite or Calvinist. In the first of these cases, the practical conclusion may be, "Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; let thy garments always be white, and thy head lack no ointment; and live joyfully with thy wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity," and this is the whole duty of the sensible man. Or the cynic may be less cheerful, and, folding his arms and knitting his brows, may survey the scene with an ill-con-

* Enfantin has died since this was written.

ditioned placidity which the force of habit eventually raises into a kind of genuine happiness. In the case of the too devout, we are to eat bread with sadness, and drink wine or water with sourness, wear garments of horse-hair, shave our crowns, and eschew wives altogether. Or, if the observer be of a Calvinistic turn, we are to be equally sour, unsocial, and self-tormenting, with the doubtful consolation that the whole world is one grand vessel of wrath. This fundamental identity, underlying such widely-varying developments in practice, might be as instructive as startling, if the persons concerned could be aroused to a recognition of it. The pious malignity of a Covenanter and the gloomy despair of a Dumas come to much the same thing. The one tells us that we may seek pleasure if we choose, but that it will only end in hollowness and misery in this world; while the other tells us the same about this world, and adds the penalties of hell in the next. Perhaps, of the two, the cynicism of M. Dumas is preferable. If everything is really vanity and vexation of spirit, at all events he rather pities mankind for it. But creatures of the Calvinistic school gloat over it, and steel us against the horrors of the next world by trying to get up a very fair rehearsal of them in this. A recognition of this fundamental agreement in their theory of the present life would, we repeat, be highly instructive to the disciples

of both schools—alike to the morbid student of the Quartier Latin and the sour presbyters of Edinburgh.

Cynicism of the style of M. Dumas is, after all, little more than a trick. The reader is bidden to look through one glass, and he sees Edward and Antonine in a state of mutual rapture tempered by consumption. Then the author gives the machine a dexterous turn, the reader looks again, and sees Edward grown fat, making love to the Prefect's wife, and Antonine standing by and holding her sides. We may see this trick worked to excess by an English satirist, who is a far greater master of it than M. Dumas. It appears as if the author of "Vanity Fair" could produce nothing in which we are not being constantly drawn aside to witness his adroit manipulation of this binocular moral apparatus. It may unquestionably be very effective if used with discretion, but its use should not be too frequent. Bestowing the highest praise of which it is susceptible, we can only say that it is ingenious. Life is not made up of such conjuror's transitions, and the reiterated intrusion of them as philosophical representations of the lot of man, tends to divert the mind from a truer view of the matter. It requires very little reflection, and no very elaborate observation, to learn that, in the main, what we call the irony of fortune is in reality the palpable result of human conduct, and that, in

the main, "man is master of his fate." His life will, in the long run, be pretty much what he has deliberately chosen to make it. There are one or two sources of misery which are beyond calculation and control—disease, for instance, and bereavement. But, after we have made allowance for these and similar elements in life, it remains abundantly clear that enough happiness and enjoyment is within the reach of nearly everybody to make life a very desirable thing. If a man's life affords two violent contrasts, the latter situation has probably flowed from the earlier by a natural course of single actions gradually accumulating into habits. Those who would see this doctrine illustrated in a fashion very far removed from the easy cynical trick by which a sort of contrary doctrine is sought to be established, may find what they seek in the incomparable *Romola.*

There is some apology for the employment of this trick of contrasts, when the object is to excite tenderness and pathos in the minds of hearers or readers. It is at once legitimate and effective in an orator, for instance, when preaching a charity sermon for a penitentiary, to bring before his listeners the contrast between the position of the wretched outcast who wearily traverses the streets of the city, and flaunts about by lamplight, and her life when she bounded over the fresh heather of her native hills, or watched the stars over the

mountain-tops. But he draws no false general conclusion from the contrast. It is a contrast resulting naturally from a certain course of conduct, and it would be preposterous on the strength of it to begin to exclaim that life is weariness and all things are vanity.

XVI.

FRIENDLY INFATUATION.

A VIVACIOUS Frenchwoman of the last century tells in her diary how, upon being presented at Versailles, she was introduced by a very great lady, "qui s'est engouée d'elle." "Voilà," cried the great lady, dragging her *protégée* after her, "cette personne dont je vous ai entretenue, qui a un si grand esprit, qui sait tant de choses. Allons, mademoiselle, parlez; madame, vous allez voir comme elle parle." Seeing that her favourite was rather at a loss, she continued, by way of suggestion, "Parlez, mademoiselle, un peu de religion; vous direz ensuite autre chose." Unless the young lady's intellect was unusually like a musical-box or a barrel-organ, her embarrassment must have been overwhelming. Voltaire himself would have felt some awkwardness in letting off a disquisition

upon religion under such circumstances; and the only person whom we can think of as at all likely to rise to the level of the occasion is the author of the "Proverbial Philosophy." Mr. Tupper, we suspect, might really enjoy being started in this unprovoked way. His productions read like those of a man to whom some silly old lady like her of Versailles had said, "Now talk a little about religion, and then you shall talk a little about something else." But though people are seldom so severely tried by friends and admirers as the young Frenchwoman by her effusive patroness, the practice of trotting out is sufficiently common and carried far enough to constitute a social nuisance of the first order. Trotting out of this kind springs from motives quite distinct from those which prompt the love for lionizing. A lady who moves heaven and earth to procure a slayer of apes or the discoverer of the Mountains of the Moon for her dinner-party or rout does not feel any real interest in the advance of geographical knowledge, or the destruction, skinning, and stuffing of African monsters. A poet, a philosopher, an adventurous traveller, derive their social value from the same causes as green peas at Christmas. They are symbolic, not indeed always of wealth and profusion, but of fashionable tastes, and they demonstrate the possession of a certain kind of social influence. An aspiring dame in a

provincial town would be rather puzzled if, on giving a party, she were required to choose between Mr. Tennyson and real turtle, and Mr. Dickens might possibly carry it over strawberries in January. Everything would depend upon the current views of the neighbourhood. Appreciation of literary merit would enter very slightly into the question, and the prime point to be considered would be whether the rival social queen could secure a poet or a novelist of equal repute. Supposing the great man to be selected in preference to some delicacy of the season, the enthusiasm with which he would be exhibited would arise, not from any admiration of his powers, but from a sense of triumph over the wife of the mayor or the vicar. All the fine things which might be said about his genius or his achievements would be neither more nor less than exultant war-whoops over a discomfited adversary.

All this is entirely different in its origin from the enthusiasm with which their acquaintances are exhibited and drawn out by people of a certain temperament. Some persons trot out the lion, as an indirect way of trotting out themselves; but, in the other case, the eagerness to show how clever, or satirical, or profound a given person is, may be quite unmixed with any interested or egotistical motive. It is the pouring forth of a gushing and honest enthusiasm. The

exhibitor really thinks that he is introducing you to one of the greatest or best of your contemporaries. People of this kind will not allow mediocrity to be possible in their friends, however earnestly these friends disclaim the pretensions made on their behalf. The man who thus has greatness thrust upon him often suffers most painfully from the amiable infatuation. He publishes a little volume of modest poems, and is horrified to find them eulogised in print, by his friendly lunatic, as combining the creative power of Shakespeare, the philosophic breadth of Wordsworth, the splendid impetuousness of Shelley, and the humour of Hood. He perhaps perpetrates an occasional ballad or operatic fantasia, which is enough to justify his persecuting admirer in passing him off as a rival of Beethoven, and superior to Mozart, before people who know better, and therefore set down the wretched hero as a cheat and an impostor. A Sanscrit dictionary on his friend's shelves convinces him that he is one of best living Orientalists; and finally, when the victim is goaded into exasperation, and says snappish things, he is represented as having a tongue more piercing and keen than the pen of Junius. Moral qualities are subjected to the same process of exaggeration. A trifling sacrifice is heroic; a very moderate piece of self-denial becomes saintly. In vain does the involuntary saint protest that he

has only done what he could not very well help doing, or even, as in self-protection, hint that he hopes to make something out of his sacrifice. The only result is that his modesty and humility are magnified into the same prodigious dimensions as all his other qualities. And besides this, these frantic enthusiasts for their friends carry their sentiments to such an extent as to view friends' enemies as their own. Not only do they insist that So-and-So is the ablest and most virtuous of men, but they assail proportionately all who have not the same faith in him, as the meanest and most envious of their kind. They cannot understand how anything but envy or wilful blindness can fail to see the excellence of their favourite, and they detest or despise all who will not bow down before their own idol.

Some people find in all this the temper of true friendship. They hold criticism and discrimination to be incompatible with real affection or goodwill, and condemn as cold or insincere the acquaintance who shrinks from the practice of this private kind of hero-worship. Yet, on consideration, it does not appear that friendly infatuation is the result of any very lofty or solid sentiment. The very men who most constantly exhibit this sort of enthusiasm for their intelligent friends are generally quite as frantic about objects without intelligence. They are just as eager that you

should admire a man's drawing-room, or his pigs, or his easy chair as his matchless intellect and immaculate virtue. In the same way that others think everything that they have is far better than anything that anybody else can have, so a man of this kind generously believes not only his friend but his friend's ox and ass and everything that is his to be worthy of supreme admiration. They carry their doctrine so far that the unreasonableness of it becomes palpable. They show that it can have no origin in the understanding, but springs from an overflow of rather watery sentiment.

Everybody has noticed this result of a gushing temperament in women, but it is also much more common among men than one suspects. One reason for this is that it is not displayed with the same kind of affected or genuine mannerism by which a woman so frequently makes herself ridiculous. A man seldom, if ever, affects enthusiasm of this sort. When he does exhibit it, he is probably in earnest. But women constantly are in the habit of simulating it where it does not really exist. There being a current notion that female nature ought to be enthusiastic, many women, both young and mature, train themselves up to the regulation pitch, and pretend to be enthusiastic, because men have a fancy that they are intended by nature to be so. The fancy is probably erroneous, and we cannot help thinking

that women are radically far less fervent than what is commonly considered the more practical sex. They can get up what appears to men to be an inexplicable excitement about pic-nics, and bazaars, and altar-cloths, and coals and blankets. But this excitement is nothing more than very natural rejoicing at the prospect of something which may relieve the lethargic humdrum of confined domestic pursuits; and we may be quite sure that if all wives could become compositors or publishers, and all young ladies be metamorphosed into conscientious printer's-devils, or high-minded copying clerks, or whatever else it is that Social Science wants to make of them, there would be a speedy end to three-fourths of what is generally interpreted to be innate female enthusiasm. It may be admitted, however, that women seem naturally more inclined than men to be enthusiastic about persons. They are not fervent about ideas, except when the idea is embodied in a convivial form—as in a pic-nic, or a Dorcas meeting. But when a human being of flesh and blood is in question, their views are generally very strong and decided in one direction or the other. They either love very warmly, or dislike very sincerely, or else virtually ignore in their own minds, anybody with whom they are brought into frequent contact. It is to women that we must go for the most striking specimens of friendly infatuation.

The virtues of a baby, a husband, or a bonnet, to whom or to which they have attached themselves, are always superlative. Girls at school are far more thorough-going and abandoned in their friendships than lads of the same age. The letters which two newly-emancipated misses exchange, and the language in which they speak of one another, seem to exhaust all the resources of enthusiasm.

But young ladies are not, as is often presumed, the only infatuated friends. Men sometimes exchange letters quite as gushing and impulsive as those of foolish school-girls, and men, too, who are very far from being simpletons. They are sometimes quite as enthusiastic about a friend as a young lady is about somebody else's baby. And there is this feature in common—the excess of enthusiasm and friendship is about equally short-lived in both cases. Friendly infatuation, though a permanent characteristic of a given man, is by no means constant in its objects. Founded rather on a sentiment than on a sober judgment, it has no root or trustworthy base; and the man who has admired his friend to excess without reason, may very well abandon him, and condemn him in excess, equally without reason. Caprice being at the bottom of the admiration, it is not wonderful that caprice should overflow it, and substitute dislike or disparagement. Hence the people who will not permit mediocrity in their

acquaintances are fickle and changeable in selecting and retaining those in whom they find or imagine superiority. The great lady who vaguely invited her young friend to talk about religion, and then about something else, probably got tired of her in a few months, and found out somebody else with higher gifts and greater parts. The infatuation of friendship, like every other product of impulsive sentimentality, at once injures him that gives and him that takes. He who likes Plato better than truth is pretty sure, as has been said, to end by liking himself better than either; and though a man may begin by trotting out his friends through disinterested enthusiasm, he will come, in course of time, to think that most people are mere vexation of spirit, and then take to trotting himself out. As for the effect upon the victim, it needs no demonstration to convince anybody that most of us are quite conscious enough of whatever merits we may possess to be able to dispense with a showman. Anything which tends to raise the average of human vanity must be mischievous.

XVII.

PITHINESS.

THE field of conversation is, in one sense, much wider in English society than it is anywhere else. Politics, for instance, fill a space among us which to nations with a different history is quite incomprehensible. A Frenchman talks politics much as Sinbad might have discussed gymnastics with the Old Man of the Sea on his back. In Italian society, politics have hitherto been partly regarded with the indifference incidental to helplessness, and partly they have been eschewed from the same sentiment which makes a man shrink from exposing the secret of hereditary insanity or the infidelity of his wife. Religion, too, with us forms a topic of characteristic prominence, and though always discussed with more or less of invincible reserve, is perhaps that which is more certain than any other

to arouse a great deal of general interest. Young women even will ask you what you think of Bishop Colenso and the Pentateuch, just as they might whether you like M. Fechter's acting or Madlle. Patti's singing. The misfortunes of our neighbours and the scandals of the town are not here the avowed basis of all conversation, as they are principally of Paris and entirely at Rome.

Considering this, it is not very easy to understand that absence of a sincere relish for pithy sayings which is undoubtedly to be noticed in nine-tenths of English people. Very few men, and fewer women, out of a too narrow circle where there has been an exceptional degree of cultivation, care for those pungent bits of absurdity which give such unaffected delight to the most commonplace of Frenchmen. Of course, at some houses where unusually clever men and unusually well-educated women are to be found, the appetite for sprightly and pointed speeches is as vigorous here as anywhere else. But such houses are not very numerous. At most dinner-tables, to let off an epigram is a certain means of checking what is ironically styled the flow of conversation. The people either laugh in a hollow way which shows them to be more than doubtful whether they have quite apprehended the point, or else simply gaze at the speaker in solemn silence with the look peculiar to oxen interrupted in their browsing. In country society,

the inclination to resent pithy talk as something of the nature of impertinence is even more noticeable than in towns, and conversation is, as a rule, reduced to a regulation level of decorous flatness. In the country they are more oppressed by the cold shade; they are more afraid of offending a vague idol of taste, of breeding, or refinement, with indefinite proprieties; and they commonly have a notion that openly to enjoy a keen, terse speech is somehow or other offensive to the idol. Poets may sing of the frankness, guilelessness, and simplicity of those whose life is amid the fields and the woods; but a good deal of this is sheer moonshine, and the truth that is left is not incompatible with the fact that country folks are in many respects infinitely more suspicious and reserved than the denizens of towns. A man who has the knack of talking pithily—which means a knack of talking pointedly, and more or less audaciously—cannot expect to be appreciated in an audience by long habit shy and reserved. And, besides, this knack is too apt to take an acrimonious turn. When Mrs. Poyser, for example, said that Mr. Craig was like a cock who thought the sun had risen on purpose to hear him crow, she was not likely to make pithiness a particularly popular quality. Apart, however, from the gall which may occasionally be infused into pithiness, the national reserve tends strongly to check much display of it. We

are all so dreadfully in earnest that we cannot tolerate the exaggeration which is more or less essential to the pithiest sayings. Yet truth may sometimes be usefully exhibited through a microscope. Its proportions may be enlarged so as the more readily to attract attention, without making it any the less *nuda veritas*. A pithy saying represents one aspect of the truth in a novel and startling way. But we are discontented with the most brilliant half-truths, because they are also half-lies. Next to the man who will not enjoy a joke until he has diligently analysed it, there is no greater nuisance than one who refuses to see the use of half of anything when it is not possible to get the whole. A pithy saying must necessarily be brief, and therefore can never convey the entire truth about the matter to which it relates, because truth is always many-sided, and surrounded by innumerable qualifications and conditions; but it may disclose the whole gist and meaning of a thing viewed from a certain point, and this may be exceedingly useful.

The English mind seems to entertain an inborn repugnance to the doctrine that brilliant expression is compatible with profound significance. French writers are, in vulgar opinion, superficial and shallow, because they have the good fortune to possess in their language an instrument which makes even dull men talk and write like wits. As

a rule, we conclude that the real solid worth of what a man says is exactly in the inverse proportion of the wit and pungency with which he says it. In fact, brilliancy and shallowness are commonly received synonyms. The best device for exciting the most solemn distrust is to accuse a man of brilliance. People will condescend to be amused by him, but they scorn the idea of putting any trust in him. There is more than one eminent living writer who is generally disposed of in an incomplete sentence, "He is very brilliant, but——." Granting his brilliance, the rest follows. Partly, perhaps, this theory is due to the necessity for consolation occasioned in dull minds by the temporary success of superior keenness. Compensation is a law of nature, and it would not be fair for the faculty of pithy speech to be united to that of solid thought. At all events, it is very soothing to stupid people to think so; and they argue from this, not quite logically, that, if wits are shallow, dullards must be deep.

Sermons must, we fear, be accounted powerful agents in extinguishing a taste for pithiness. A nation so mightily addicted as we are to pulpit discourses can scarcely be expected to enjoy short pointed phrases big with meaning. Preachers are like the Irish gentleman who so violently outraged the dignity of a Committee of the House of Commons not long ago. After reading for about

an hour from a pile of manuscript, which seemed to be good for at least five hours more, he was asked by the Chairman if he could not give the Committee the pith of it. "Shure," thundered the injured Hibernian, "and it's all pith." So divines, we suppose, deem their discourses to be all pith. In Scotland they are nearly as fond of sermons as they are of whisky, and the consequence is they have so utterly lost all appreciation of pithiness, if they ever had any, as to mistake for it that awful and indescribable something known as Scotch "*wut*." We should be very slow, however, to laugh at the ponderosity and pointlessness of "wut" when we remember the windy stuff which has passed current among ourselves for the pithy utterance of Proverbial Philosophy. Thus—

If the mind is wearied by study or the body worn by sickness,
It is well to lie fallow for a while in the vacancy of sheer amusement;
But when thou prosperest in health and thine intellect can soar untired,
To seek uninstructive pleasure is to sleep on the couch of indolence.

Reflecting that countless editions of this sonorous inanity have been the chief literary food of a whole generation of young ladies, who can wonder at the boundless insipidity of talk at balls and dinner-parties? Questions whether her brother, if she had one, would like cheese, or whether she can wag her left ear, are quite sensible enough for the

foolish virgin who has fancied she was drinking in wisdom and philosophy from such wondrous verses as—

Thrust not thine hand among the thorns but with a leathern glove.

Or,

The epitome of common life is seen in the common epitaph,
Born on such a day, and died on such another, with an interval of three-score years.

Or,

Man liveth from hour to hour, and knoweth not what may happen.

It does not say much for the popular discrimination of philosophy or literature that the world should have been so successfully taken in by this most woful counterfeit of pithiness—a pithiness which expands the baldest platitudes into monstrous length and pomposity. And yet one may know plenty of solemn wiseacres who bore their wives and children, and as many other people as they can prevail upon to listen to them, with oracular sayings of equal vapidity. They fancy they go straight to the root of all sorts of matters, of the extent and nature of whose surface even they have no conception. Sham pithiness of this sort is the most wearisome kind of dulness. A man had much better confine himself all his life to the weather and the one or two other topics of equal safety than turn general oracle.

The ordinary novels commonly give a very

faithful representation of the average spirit and point of every-day conversation, and this is one of their most tedious faults. To listen to tame talkers is bad enough, but to have to read weak chat, entered with all the accuracy of a log-book, is intolerable. As the characters in a book cannot be always talking pithily and to the point, the wiser novelists are beginning to omit long dialogues altogether. Mr. Trollope, it is true, still goes on writing out long palavers between Government clerks and their landladies, between simple girls and their not less simple mammas, between dull officials and commercial travellers and cathedral dignitaries; but he writes them out with a charm peculiarly his own. Yet, notwithstanding this, one is sometimes puzzled to know what is gained by three or four pages somewhat in this style:*

"Here is the inkstand."

"Thank you. I think I shall write to John. I daresay he will like to hear from me."

"Yes, I am sure he will. He told me he was always grateful for news from Barchester."

"Did he? It is natural that he should like to feel that his old friends have not forgotten him."

"Mrs. Proudie met me just now at the gate, and asked if we had had a letter from John since he went away."

"I wonder why she should ask you."

"I do not know. Perhaps she thinks we are more likely to have heard from him than any one else in Barchester."

"Yes. Have you a stamp?"

* As a mistake has been made in this point, it is just to Mr. Trollope to mention that this passage is not to be found in any of his books.

Mr. Millais draws two elegant young ladies, and the printer places below them—"Have you a stamp?" and the whole thing is a very fair photograph of what goes on in any number of houses every day in the year. The dialogue does not seem very pithy, but it pleases a very great number of readers, who did not see much point in, and were not much pleased by, the Florentine gossip of "Romola." It would be difficult to find a better illustration of what we mean by complaining of the lack of relish for pithy sayings in English conversation than may be derived from a comparison of some of the dialogues in Mr. Trollope's books with the chatter of Bratti, and Nello the barber, and his friends, in the Florentine piazza.

XVIII.

THE THEORY OF LIFE FROM BELOW-STAIRS.

THERE may be observed in the world an immense number of invariable but mysterious co-existences of phenomena. Certain sets of conditions are always found side by side, and wherever one of them is discerned its concomitants are sure to be present also; yet we are unable to penetrate into the secret of their connection, or to discover between them any natural relation of cause and effect. We fail to reach the foundation of the incomprehensible affinity, and are forced to content ourselves with simply recording or observing the fact. Some years ago, for example, it was noticed that enthusiastic friendship for Hungary seemed always to involve Unitarianism and Homœopathy, and in our own day controversial free-thinkers are almost

always teetotallers and wear long hair. Why a man should not profess belief in Kossuth without disbelief in the doctrine of the Trinity, or should find hair-cutting incongruous with straw-splitting, is as inscrutable as the well-known fact that a man who sells small coal also sells greens and oysters. Mr. Herbert Spencer suggests another of these mysterious affinities, when he intimates in one of his essays, that nobody is likely to construct a sound system of psychology who conforms to the ordinary usage of going out to dinner in evening dress. But why should swallow-tails thus become, as it were, intellectual cerements, or why should a white tie deaden the moral sentiments? We cannot tell, but must take Mr. Spencer's word for it. Then there is another still more notorious affinity, which is also still more utterly mysterious. A hospitable gentleman one day informed his butler that six clergymen were going to dine with him, and desired him to make due preparation. "May I ask, sir," deferentially replied the butler, "whether they are 'Igh or Low Church?" "What on earth makes you ask such a question?" "Because, sir, you see, 'if they're 'Igh they drink, and if they're Low they eat." We can no more tell why Arminianism implies a passion for old port, and Calvinism a passion for meat-teas and heavy suppers, than we can tell why Chablis goes with oysters, or claret with roast mutton. The truth is

one of those ultimate facts which are incapable of further analysis.

Not the least remarkable of such invariable connections is that between a certain theory of life and the occupancy of the servants' hall. That it is remarkable, and that it is moreover quite inscrutable, will appear when we have illustrated the bearing of the theory in question. As it happens, an eminent writer has recently published a highly-coloured exposition of it. Mr. Pierce Egan is, to an enormous portion of the public, all that Milton, Shakespeare, and Scott are supposed to be to all Britain. He is by far the most successful writer in what has been by far the most successful of cheap popular journals, and tens of thousands of cooks, housemaids, butlers, flunkies, and all other sorts and conditions of men below-stairs, look eagerly forward to each seventh day, when he thrills them with delight, paralyses them with horror, and leaves them prostrate in despair. "E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath Day" to them, without its regular pennyworth of superhuman excitement. The writer who has won this tremendous popularity seems to have resolved to surpass himself in one gigantic effort. He has chosen for a title the simple but profound and pathetic exclamation, "Such is Life!" and we may therefore conclude that he intends it, and that his myriads of readers accept it, as a true picture of

the motives and passions and tendencies of human nature, and of the ordinary language and conduct of human beings. The incidents are at once too many and too complicated for us to enumerate them here. They consist as yet principally of embezzlements, forgeries, attempted abduction, mysterious flights, cruelties in the work-room, and murder. The general effect upon the mind of the reader is about as agreeable as that produced by one of those wonderfully exhilarating calendars issued by the Accidental Death Insurance Company, in which, by a series of twelve cartoons, the accidents peculiar to each month are graphically represented. In September your gun bursts, in November you are run over by an omnibus in a fog, in December you are drowned while skating, in July you are struck by lightning, and in April —though one hardly knows why that month should have been selected for the purpose—you will probably be dashed to atoms in a railway accident.

Then, under Mr. Pierce Egan's treatment, the whole scene receives a general toning of thunder and lightning. If this author is more powerful in one point than another, it is in his entire mastery of the elements. He wields the thunderbolt as to the manner born, and manages the rain as if he were Jupiter Pluvius incarnate. The following brief passage may serve to show the author's strength in this respect, while it also illustrates

the popular idea about love-making in high life:

He started.

"My God! Mabel, you love me?" he cried, in a low tone, but with an intensity of excitement which no words can describe.

It was only a look that she gave him in reply.

With a cry of immeasurable joy, he drew her to his heart, and pressed his lips to hers in one long delirious passionate kiss.

At the same instant a blinding flash of lightning enveloped them in a sheet of flame; it was followed by a tremendous crash of thunder. With a startling shriek, Mabel disengaged herself from his embrace and fled like one in frantic fear.

He covered his face with his hands, sank upon the seat, and gave way to an abrupt and convulsive burst of tears.

Love and hate, each of course of the most fearfully intense kind, are apparently the only two passions which the human breast is capable of entertaining, and as a natural result, active life in the intervals of embezzlement is almost entirely made up of love-scenes and murders. There are three of the latter, if we remember rightly, in the first half-dozen chapters, and there is every likelihood that we may have a great many more before the author will consider that he has allotted them their fair space in the picture of life. In fact the very last love-scene, at which we were left to pant for a whole week until "our next," promises a very fine piece of bloodshed before all is over. The young lady, after being apostrophized as "fairer than the white dove of the forest herd"—whatever that may be—"fairer than the swan upon the lake, the dove

in the dove-cote, the lily in the emerald vale or upon the azure pool," replies in an oration which must have taken at least a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes to deliver, and then perorates thus:

> Love is not to be given and taken back at will. I feel that now I am yours—be kind, gentle, and loving to me; and not one of those women of whom you have told me who love men so tenderly shall rival me in adoration of and devotion to you. Slight me or desert me, and I will pursue you with the savage ferocity of a tiger, a demon, a devil hunting you to perdition."
>
> Her eyes dilated and glared into his with such an unnaturally malignant expression in them, that he felt cold drops of perspiration burst out from beneath his wig, and trickle behind his ears, and down the nape of his neck.

It would be very curious to discover, if we may be pardoned for intruding upon so sacred a scene, how far the cook models her reply to the passionate policeman, or the housemaid her acceptance of the hand of the butcher or baker, upon sublime outbursts like this. Probably, however, they are only capable of the language of romance when a pen is in their hand, and in personal interviews confine themselves to more unimpassioned speech. The letters which trials for breach of promise occasionally reveal, are often surprisingly like the style of the penny novel, and seem to have been exceedingly sweet to the persons concerned; but we question whether the boldest Jeames who ever put on calves would venture to salute his beloved in person as "fairer than the whitest dove of the 'erd," or "more precious than the gems in the

depths of mines and seas, or sparkling in the diadems of crowned monarchs." Again, if her master comes home from the City moody and ferocious after a fall in stocks, does his faithful maid exclaim, "Such is life!" and immediately infer that his defalcations, embezzlements, and forgeries are gradually coming to light, and that he already feels the grip of the detective? Or, if she lives in a sphere or a square where the City is unknown, does she really imagine, when the duke or the marquis goes out of an afternoon, that he is gone to waylay innocent virgins in the park, or to give orders to the unflinching groom to put some inconvenient mistress to death?

One portion of stories like "Such is Life" their readers undoubtedly do take in solemn earnest. The horrors of the work-room at a fashionable modiste's are possibly overdone, and Mr. Egan daubs on his red and black rather too unsparingly; but without question most of his readers will take his representation with implicit faith. All the space which can be spared from murder and love and aristocratic and commercial misdemeanors, is given to the interior of a fashionable West-end establishment. The least odious title which the author bestows upon it is "a human slaughter-house," and the foreman rejoices in the ghastly name of "Mr. Giltgore." The whole of a very long chapter is devoted to a fierce descrip-

tion of the work-room the night before a levee; "the red-hot blaze of the gas," "the rustling of the splendid fabrics and gorgeous tissues," "the sound of the ceaseless needle—the shuttle that weaves a shroud." Then there are shrieks, hysteric sobs, hollow cries, staggerings, reelings, livid faces, and all for ladies "then sleeping luxuriantly in their down beds, who would be called early that morning, and though death was interwoven and intertwined with the trimming and braid upon their corsages and robes, they must have them to wear, so that they might shine and look resplendent during a momentary glissade before her most blessed and gracious Majesty." It must be an immense relief to the over-taxed reader to turn away from all this to that exquisitely funny page at the end, where "Tom-tit" is taught that "in courtship the utmost delicacy should be observed towards the young lady; it is the worst of all mistakes to wound a woman's *amour-propre*—women and priests never forgive;" where "Jacqueline" tells us she "is short, amiable, domestic, nineteen years of age, and wishes to marry a tall man—a policeman not objected to."

People may fancy at first sight that the romance for a penny fills the same place in one circle that the romance for thirty-one shillings and sixpence fills in another—that it is a mere pastime, and that the grotesqueness and violence of the whole tone

are only natural results of the ignorance of the readers for whose tastes it is designed. But this, we think, is a mistaken view. By far the greater part of the ordinary three-volume novels are hopelessly insipid and meaningless, and have barely substance enough to serve to while away the time for lazy and listless women. The penny novel is absurd, often monstrously absurd, but it is never either insipid or meaningless. Fastidious people may laugh at its high-flown language, or the unreality of its characters, or the impossibility of its incidents, but, in spite of all the coarseness of conception and roughness of execution, there is a very clearly marked theory of life behind all these flaring colours and false drawing. In "Such is Life," this theory is as plainly to be traced as in all the other stories of its class. It is, in fact, the philosophical form of an idea which has more commonly assumed the shape of a theological creed. The notion that the world is the scene of an eternal conflict between the two sovereign principles of Good and Evil existed before the *London Journal;* but formerly the two principles were embodied in gods and demons, in Ahriman and Ormuzd, who filled earth with the confusion of their contest, and divided between them the souls of men. Nearly all the savage tribes at the present day pray to "the good god," and cower before the god who sends the thunder and the

lightning and the hurricane. One is always trying to make men happy and virtuous; the other is actively blighting and destroying both virtue and happiness.

The penny novel insinuates a philosophical theory which comes to the same thing, without the intervention of real deities from heaven and hell. Life is still the scene of conflict between virtue and vice, between helpless innocence and reckless wickedness, between weakness and grinding cruelty. The whole course of human existence and human conduct is the visible result of this appalling struggle. As the philosopher walks through the streets and surveys his kind, his eye is attracted by one never-ending spectacle of the wicked dogging the virtuous, of the bad man striving with the bad man for the ruin of the good, or wretched women lost and undone by the selfishness of the rich and great. The two principles exhibit themselves, not as supernatural beings, but as embodied in the men and women whom we meet in life. Madame Volige and Mr. Giltgore, who crush the lives out of starving seamstresses; Lord Calfton, who assaults defenceless maidens in the park; Mr. Skinchink, who thrusts the penniless orphan into the streets; Mr. Aspinoil, who robs and seduces and murders all the way through life—these still carry on the old combat. How long the combat

will last, and whether it will ever come to an end, the philosopher of the penny novel does not inquire. He only reflects on what is, not on what may be. He looks out into life, and this is all he sees or thinks worth presenting to his disciples. Of course, the thousands who read these stories do not put all this into any distinct shape in their own minds, but most of them do isnensibly adopt it as their only theory of life. Whether it is better or worse than no theory at all is, perhaps, open to discussion. What practical effect it has, if any, would also be interesting to know. Very probably, however, actual life goes on as vacantly and as independently of theory in the servants' hall as in the drawing-room.

XIX.

NEEDY MEN.

THE social tendencies of an advancing condition of national wealth have not received all the consideration to which they are entitled. The economical bearings of a progressive state are tolerably well understood, and the more rapid the progress in accumulating wealth the more distinctly are these bearings visible in wages, population, and rents. Publicists, too, have discussed the political consequences likely to ensue from the continuous advance of national opulence. But no attempt seems to have been made to register the actual or probable effects of this advance upon what may be called the balance of society. The amount of wealth accumulated in the hands of individuals is constantly and rapidly increasing, but the method in which the new accretions are distributed is much

less evident. Does the distribution obey the time-honoured and natural principle that to him that hath shall be given, while from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath? Or is the new supply destined, in some measure, to fill up the chasm between the very rich and the very poor, by pouring itself out in the direction of the latter? Or will it both raise up new classes in society, and deepen the distances between those already possessing a distinct existence? This question—partly economical, and partly belonging to the domain of social philosophy—deserves a far more extensive investigation than we can now attempt, but it may be worth while to indicate the working of the growing wealth of the community upon what is probably the most neglected of all social formations or strata.

It is manifest that general prosperity must have a very considerable influence upon the unlucky people who do not partake in it; as a matter of fact, the increase alike in the number of the rich, and in the wealth of those who were rich before, affects most keenly those who had not much to start with, and who now seem to have still less by comparison. It is not the very poor or the destitute who suffer in any way from the aggrandisement of other classes, but those who more directly belong to those classes without

enjoying any share in the aggrandisement. If the rent-roll of the squire is doubled, the farm-labourer does not necessarily either get or expect double rations and double wages. If by chance he catches a glimpse through the dining-room window of the squire at dinner the sight breeds no fastidiousness over his own porridge and butter-milk. As the mill-hand sees his master drive up to the counting-house every morning in a fine carriage, he suffers no loss of dignity or self-esteem by the thought that he has to make his legs carry him home to a not over-comfortable cottage. In this case, up to a certain age, hope often comes in, and the operative does not despair of one day becoming what his employer is now. The shop-keeper, as a rule, looks upon people who have grown either rich or more rich with unmodified satisfaction. The new acquisitions will be spent among the class to which he belongs, and a portion of them must flow into his own till.

But there is a very numerous section of people to whom the great and waxing prosperity of those with whom they are brought into continual contact is little better than a downright affliction. Their characteristics are various, but may all be summed up in the familiar phrase, neediness. A distinction must, at the outset, be made between the needy and the destitute, though for some purposes the terms may be synonymous. The differ-

ence between the needy man and the destitute is not merely one of degree, nor that one has too little while the other has nothing. The inconveniences to which either is subject to, it is true, spring from a similar source, but this is perhaps the only common point between them. Any one who looks upon destitution as only a high degree of neediness falls into the same blunder as if, in mathematics, he should treat zero as non-existent. Destitution, like zero, has properties of its own; and so, in like manner, has neediness. By needy men, therefore, we do not mean men in the position of the starving student who was not long ago sentenced to three months' imprisonment for stealing a sixpenny letter-weight from the British Museum. The needy man, properly so called, is commonly well clothed, and suffers from no lack of food. Nay, he may even wear purple and fine linen, may fare sumptuously every day, and on occasion be admitted to kings' houses. He would no more think of stealing than would an archbishop. In good society, the needy man is generally unmarried. A needy couple is one of the very bitterest grievances to which thriving people are exposed. They are commonly importunate, not seldom impudent and scandal-mongers, and always hungry. And the worst of their position is, that it is divested of hope. A man may be either temporarily or chronically needy, but so

long as he is needy by himself there is always some chance for him—in matrimony, if nowhere else—and society will not resolutely exclude him. Of course, he always labours under grave disadvantages. The fine open-hearted English matron with marriageable daughters shuns him as a skater shuns rotten ice. The generous British father, with a large realized fortune and a daughter on whom to bestow it—fond as he is of ingenuous youth, and profoundly indifferent as he professes to be to riches—will show him hot hospitality for six months and then forbid him the house. And these precautions are not wholly unreasonable in themselves, because perhaps the most common mark of a needy man is the confirmed intention not to waste his affections upon a dowerless maiden.

This, in fact, leads to the distinction between a needy man and one who is simply not well off. The latter may be contented with the scantiness of his means, and feel "rich, not in the abundance of his possessions, but in the fewness of his wants." The needy man, on the contrary, is essentially, and from the force of the term, not contented. He has not enough to procure for himself the position or the pleasures to which he aspires, and he is always on the alert for an opening, without over much scrupulosity as to the quarter in which it may be offered or the means by which it may be seized. Not that the needy man in

general would perpetrate an act of downright dishonesty; but his wants, whether fancied or real, and the urgency of his desire to gratify them, combine to blunt delicacy of feeling and sense of honour. He differs from the downright adventurer, first, in knowing precisely what he wants—either money or, what comes to the same thing, something which only money can obtain: and, secondly, he is not reckless. The needy man respects the ordinances and conventions of society, and it is this in which lies the difficulty of his position. A threadbare coat, a shabby hat, and gloves with holes in them, do indeed mark a phase of neediness, but it is only when neediness is on the point of becoming destitution. Perhaps, however, out of deference to popular phraseology, we ought to admit that there are two classes of needy men—two varieties of the same species. There is the needy man in society, and there is the needy man out of society. One merely wants bread and beer; the other seeks supplementary advantages of various kinds. One merely desires to keep the wolf away; the other is anxious for horses, wines, and a balance at the bank. One fares greasily at chop-houses or aridly in dirty lodgings; the other may dine in Belgravia or Pall Mall, and lounge in the Row. As is the case with all varieties of species, the points of difference between these two kinds of needy men are innumerable;

but the most important of all is, that the needy man of society mixes with the people who are not needy, while he of the other kind is commonly solitary, or, if gregarious, herds with men of like position with himself.

The fact that others are growing rich in no way affects the man of supreme neediness, any more than the elevation of a landowner to the peerage affects Hodge and Giles. But it is quite different with his well-clad and well-fed brother in neediness. The latter suffers acutely from the increasing prosperity of other people, if, as is postulated by the fact of his being needy, his own prosperity does not advance in proportion. His friends with increased means naturally increase their outlay, and so widen the space over which his aspirations have to extend. A junior clerk, for example, in a Government office, or an officer living on credit and his pay, or one of that nondescript crowd, whose numbers are every day growing greater, of young men who flock up to town to make a speedy fortune by literature — any of these becomes more and more needy as the people with whom he associates approach nearer to opulence. His wants grow with their wealth. The only visible difference between him and the wealthy being not in education, or ancestry, or breeding, but simply in their wealth, this widening of the gulf is apt to generate discontent and misanthropy. A public

writer has defended our expensive colonial possessions on the ground that they furnish an outlet for this "instructed indigence," which otherwise would seethe and boil in revolutionary fermentation at home. Without apprehending such serious consequences as this from the educated but needy classes, we may easily perceive that their position is one that is desirable neither for themselves nor for the commonwealth.

And yet, in spite of the wider enforcement of the modern principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talens*, the class of the needy is as rapidly on the increase as the amount of the public wealth. Partly, no doubt, the opening to all comers of various employments that were once close has been itself the cause of this rather unexpected effect. Lads who would else have stayed behind counters or gone into the Church get nominations for Government offices from the borough member; or else rush into the field for Indian appointments; or else, as we have said, allured by the false pictures of foolish novelists, come up to London to earn a very fine competency by writing for the newspapers. The new comers either succeed to the detriment of the once privileged class, or they fail to their own detriment. In either case, the ranks of the needy are sensibly swelled, and the aggregate of social discontent proportionately enlarged. Still, this discontent is

not likely to become so formidable as the argument to which we have referred would seem to imply. The "instructed indigence" of the Treasury clerk or young lieutenant is, after all, pretty harmless. Anything revolutionary is the last thing in the world likely to occur to either, or to find any favour with them if suggested by somebody else. As they stroll home to rather stuffy bedrooms after waltzing in gilded saloons, they may be discontented at the stiffness of some odious chaperone or the coldness of a favourite partner, but they certainly never dream of political revolution as a remedy for either the stuffy bedroom or the odious chaperone. It is in the needy man out of society—the Bohemian who asks you if you happen to have such a thing as half-a-crown about you—that levelling notions are likely to take root. But this social formation probably is stationary, and extends neither in one direction nor another, in consequence of the rapid accumulation of wealth among the community. The needy men of fashion and of a sort of position will grow a more numerous body as the standard of living rises with the fortunes of the richest part of the community, but they will have to undergo a radical change in character before they threaten to become politically dangerous.

XX.

PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS.

THE people who have been led by Mr. Arnold's attractive enthusiasm to sigh for an English Academy will be very much perplexed at the result of a recent election in Paris. In England, so it is said, we have no recognised home for ideas as distinguished from practice. There is no *haut jury*, no "sovereign organ of public opinion," which shall know how to discriminate between pure disinterested thought and a mere makeshift kind of practical skill. It is the business of such a jury to award whatever distinctions may be in their gift to the best and highest kind of thought and knowledge, without any regard being had to other considerations. The advantage of a critical body like an Imperial Academy is that it ensures the existence of one spot at least where the best

that is known and thought in the world shall be properly valued, "irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind." A curious comment on this very engaging theory may be found in an election which took place not long since in the French Academy. The death of Mr. McCulloch left a vacancy in the Foreign Associateships. Three names were suggested—those of Mr. Mill, Mr. Gladstone, and Dr. Whewell. Two of the candidates, therefore, were men of ideas, and the third a man of practice. Two of them were thinkers, and the third a bold or adroit financier. The Academicians, the official champions of "disinterested thought" against practical compromises and the like, rejected Mr. Mill and Dr. Whewell in favour of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The most fanatical admirers of Mr. Gladstone would scarcely contend that he has added more to the stock of valuable speculative ideas than Mr. Mill, or even than Dr. Whewell. So that, in this instance at least, the immortal body which has been held up to the admiration and envy of the un-idea'd Briton has been swayed by precisely those considerations which it is the express function of such bodies to thrust aside.

But the preference of the politician before the philosopher is interesting to a wider extent than this. There are some circumstances peculiar to the present time which make it more than ordi-

narily worth while to compare the respective rewards of literary or speculative and political pursuits. It has been said by some foreign critic that every respectable Englishman hopes one day to be a member of Parliament. This is so far true that, in the first instance, most young men who aspire to make a way up from the ranks see no other road open than that which lies through political success. The reputation of a prominent member of the House of Commons is just that which most exactly hits the fancy of ambitious youth. His name is constantly in the mouths of men and in the columns of the newspapers. He enjoys a good many pleasant personal distinctions. His life offers abundance of excitement, and he has unrivalled opportunities for the discharge of the beloved but rather vague duty of influencing his generation. Perhaps the strange career of Mr. Disraeli has had a great deal to do with the political ambition of so many clever lads at the Universities. Sarcasm is a great feature in the debates of the Oxford or Cambridge Union, and the orator who can most ruthlessly belabour his antagonist invariably carries off the palm of popularity. The number of undergraduate Disraelis is astonishing, and each of them is persuaded that, if he could only get into Parliament, he could not fail to gain his two favourite ends in life—personal reputation, and the spread of what he pardonably

mistakes for his principles. Even those who do not talk at the debating society, but read hard in their own rooms, have always, at some time or another, designs upon the House. A little experience, and the necessity of earning a living, effectually control these wild ideas; but probably men make all the better lawyers and parsons for thinking that if their star had been brighter, instead of preaching to rustics or drawing deeds, they would have been exposing the shallow sophistries of a Gladstone or denouncing the base hand-to-mouth policy of a Palmerston. It would be interesting to know how many of those who are crowding to the Inns of Court without the faintest prospect of practice are influenced by some shadowy notion that the bar is, at all events, a kind of stepping-stone to public life. If a man on leaving college is so unfortunate as to have a small competency of three or four hundred a-year, it is quite surprising how long the old notions of political distinction will linger in his mind and affect his conduct. The hope of getting into Parliament occupies just the same space in the visions of the educated young man of leisure as the hope of getting into the Church occupies in the dreams of many a pious young grocer or chemist. The fondest imaginations of the one centre upon a surplice and stole and bands, exactly as those of the other do upon a brilliant speech, amid loud

cheers and laughter, in the House of Commons. There is a mixed motive in both cases. The devout grocer dreams of the glory of standing in an oak pulpit with a crimson velvet cushion, but he is also sincerely anxious to preach the Gospel. The would-be politician is not more attracted by the outside glitter than by the substantial opportunities for good in his imaginary career.

The quantity of available working-power which is fruitlessly expended in these aspirations after political openings is much greater than might be suspected. The class of men who are just independent of a profession is being constantly and largely recruited from among the sons of moderately successful merchants and lawyers. The question how this class can be most advantageously utilized is of obvious interest. With education and leisure, what is the best investment a man can make of his ability and industry? In a few cases the individual predilection for active or tranquil pursuits is so irrepressible that no choice is left. But, as a rule, anybody at the outset of life is pretty free to select the groove in which he means to run, provided all the conditions are fairly before him when he is called upon to make the selection. Unluckily, most people come to a decision with only a very partial view of the conditions, and there is an almost irresistible temptation to suppose that permanent natural bias coincides

with the direction of a temporary and superficial inclination. A man should look rather widely about him before he forms a final decision that the bent of his character is only compatible with the life either of the politician or of the student. It is worth while to take a very close view of the rewards which attend success in either line. To be able to look at the success of the orator without being dazzled by its brilliancy is a matter of considerable difficulty to the juvenile philosopher. Even a body of elderly sages cannot, as we see, always accomplish it. A young man must have more than ordinary self-control who would not rather have delivered such an oration as some of Mr. Gladstone's than have written such a book as the "System of Logic" or the "History of Inductive Philosophy." In fact, one would scarcely have a right to think ill of him if he preferred the dignity of the Chancellorship or an Archbishopric to the very highest reputation as a philosopher. It is only given to exceptional minds, and those not always the richest or highest, to act on the principle that perishable fame is a mere vanity of vanities. Some men would rather have been the author of "Hamlet" or the "Principia" than have held the highest authority in the State, but they are very often just the men of the smallest intellectual calibre and least likely to erect one of these intellectual monuments more lasting than brass.

Practically, however, the choice does not lie between the highest political and the highest literary fame. If a man had Mr. Mill's profound speculative power, the brilliant rewards of an eloquent financier would offer no allurement to him. If he possessed Mr. Gladstone's fluency of speech and financial ingenuity, the pleasures of vast knowledge and mere abstract speculation would appear unspeakably tame and unattractive. To most even of those who have a chance of entering Parliament the alternative lies, not between the front benches and the *magnum opus*, but between a secondary position in politics and a secondary position in a more tranquil sphere. It is only a very few who can be either Mills or Gladstones, but there is an immense interval, alike in literature and politics, between the leaders and the ruck. In England it would seem that there are infinitely more people pressing into the political than the philosophic second-places. The extrinsic attractions of even minor political success are so vastly superior to those of literary success, that men are content to undergo for the first the pains of greater uncertainty in its attainment, and to sacrifice some of the keenest pleasures of mental ease.

After all, there is nothing very odd in this, one may say. The prime characteristic of the Englishman is activity and energy, and the conflicts of the political arena gratify a national instinct.

And this may explain the fact, but it certainly furnishes no good reason why the hopes of a political career should stand in the way of what might be an extremely useful literary career. A second-rate politician is very useful in his own way, yet very few of them suffice for all that men of their stamp have any power to do. But second-rate books—and be it observed that this does not mean fifth-rate—may be almost indefinitely multiplied with the greatest general advantage to thought. The second-rate thinker may, in spite of being second-rate, raise the average of public opinion and knowledge, whether the form in which he embodies his thoughts be that of fiction, history, criticism, or pure speculation. Mr. Mill once said that only two modes were left in which a man could hope to produce much direct effect upon "the minds and destinies" of his countrymen—as a member of Parliament, or an editor of a London newspaper. He has himself been an eminent proof that his proposition is only partially true. But if it were wholly true, it need produce no profound discouragement in those who are not so lucky as to be either members of Parliament or London editors. People have vicious and slovenly ways of reading books, it is true; and a thinker's best chance of getting an idea widely sown may be in the columns of a periodical or a newspaper. But this is less important than that he should possess an idea. The

question of finding an outlet is easily solved. A greater difficulty than the means of diffusing thought is the process which is most likely to generate it. Even if the thinking is only second-hand, it is still worth something as soon as it is fairly assimilated by the borrower.

The esteem in which good literature is held among Englishmen is not in any way discreditable, notwithstanding the accusations which transcendentalists may find it soothing to themselves to bring against us. A history like Mr. Grote's or Mr. Merivale's is as keenly relished here as elsewhere. The author of a successful novel enjoys even more popularity than he probably desires. A vigorous writer in any department of literature has his reward as well in praise as pudding. Yet contemporary literature is infested with a class who correspond to the so-called literates in theology—men and women who have neither thought nor knowledge. One reason of this is what we have endeavoured to point out—the exclusive taste of so large a majority of educated men with leisure for the active pursuits of politics. It would be a serious misfortune if the ambition of such a class were wholly diverted from their present objects. The profound erudition and the refined intelligence of Germany and France would be too dearly purchased at the cost of their political apathy and depression. But there is no reason to

suppose that a dearth of wise politicians would infallibly follow from any encouragement that might be given to philosophers. Only a rather fairer proportion might be desired. We should be content, for instance, if a third of the youths who, on leaving Oxford, propose somehow to imitate the career of Mr. Disraeli or Mr. Gladstone, would aspire to write a book like Dean Milman's history, or any of Mr. Mill's works. The aspiration would probably be as imperfectly gratified in one case as the other; but the preparation, whether in partial or entire leisure, for historical or critical composition, would be much more satisfactory than the vague process of a political training, carried on elsewhere than in the House.

If total neglect of, and lack of interest in, practical politics were an indispensable condition of even moderate literary success, there would, as has been said, be grave objection to such a change of feeling. But a man may form sound political judgments notwithstanding the more serious attention which he pays to non-political ideas and subjects. In fact it is sufficiently notorious that some of the most sagacious statesmen have been also profound abstract thinkers and inquirers in other departments. The two characters, in their fullest measure, are not frequently combined. Still it is clear that intenser interest in abstract subjects does not of necessity extinguish

all practical interests. People may be taught to believe this even in a country which has no Academy and no "sovereign organ of public opinion."

XXI.

AUTHORS AND BOOKS.

CRITICISM fills so large a space in the thought and literature of the time, and people who think about it at all hold such widely different views, both as to the ends at which criticism should aim, and the most effective way of reaching such ends, that there is scarcely any minor subject to which it is better worth while for readers, as well as writers, to recur. We all take in so much criticism in one shape or another, either direct or second-hand, that anything which helps us to discriminate between what is a good style and what is a bad style in a critic—between the kinds of criticism that are best suited to this or that set of subjects, and most likely to correct and balance the tendencies of the prevailing modes of thought of a given time or a given class of readers—must be very useful, and ought to be

made the most of. M. Sainte-Beuve, in one of his recently republished *Causeries*, raises a point of this kind. He insists that observation of character is one of the most important functions of criticism. The examination of a book is principally valuable when it is the means of making us acquainted with some more examples of our kind; and we have not got the best out of a book unless it has taught us something of the nature of the man or woman by whom it was written. As Joubert put it, "knowledge of character is the charm of criticism." The most interesting thing, therefore, about a work is, not so much what it is in its results, as by what means and under what conditions it came to be executed. The business of the critic is less to point out what seems to be wise or foolish, true or false, than to furnish explanations from the life of the writer of the excellence or worthlessness of what he has written. The question which a philosophic critic ought to set himself to answer is, not what is the value of the book, but what new glimpse into the intricacies of human character does it offer? And, in order to answer this question adequately, it is of course necessary to know as much as possible of the circumstances by which an author was surrounded, of his origin, of his friends, of his habits. "What were his opinions in the matter of religion? How was he affected by external nature? How did he conduct himself in

the matter of women? in the matter of money? Was he rich or poor? What were his habits, what was his daily plan of life?" Not one of these questions, we are assured, is indifferent in judging any book other than a treatise on pure geometry. "Literary production," in short, says M. Sainte-Beuve, "is to me in no way distinct, or at least separable, from the rest of the man and his organization. I can relish a book, but it is difficult for me to judge of it independently of any knowledge of the man himself."

Coming from one who is perhaps the most accomplished of living critics, this view is particularly worth considering. Within certain limits, it is a view with which nobody is likely to quarrel. The more we know about men, especially about men of exceptional talent or genius, the more we may be expected to have our sympathies widened and our practical judgment of character expanded and refined. Even if we do not care to imitate the conduct of a man of genius in the matter of money, in the matter of women, in his daily plan of life, it is impossible for us to know too much of plans of life which rest on principles opposed to our own. Such knowledge is the only means of keeping the mind clear from that pedantic conceit which makes what the French call a Grocer, and the Germans a Philistine. Some men, again, of whom Dr. Johnson is the almost proverbial type,

interest us solely by their characters and plans of life, and not at all by what they have written. Their writings may first have drawn our attention to them, but it is not their writings for which they are most valued. Dr. Arnold and, in a less degree, Edward Irving are more recent examples of men whose biographies will be more durable than their own books and sermons. And in judging of the scope and force of a man's genius, we ought clearly to take into account all the external circumstances of his life which were of a kind to restrict the free play of his powers in their own proper bounds. A critic would have a very poor notion of his business who attempted to estimate the natural genius and vigour of Shelley without reference to the fact that he was only in his twenty-ninth year when he was drowned; or of Byron, without remembering that he was an aristocrat, and had a very unwise woman for his mother. So far as all this goes, M. Sainte-Beuve's position is impregnable. The knowledge of the character of an author is always interesting. There are some authors whose character is the most interesting thing about them. And, thirdly, in the words of M. Villemain, "it is only by studying a man's entire life, his character, his habitual thoughts, that we can gain a thorough understanding of his works and his talent." One of the chief merits of a very eminent English writer of the present day is the

prominence which he has given to this view. Those who have read the essays on Burns and on Johnson, on Diderot and on Voltaire, have been most effectually taught that there is no divorcing a man from his book; or, in other words, that a book is, after all, only one portion, and perhaps not the most important portion, of the author's whole existence.

Even while we admire the interest and graphic force which the adoption of this view lends to the more elaborate pieces of criticism, it is impossible to help noticing that such a view is apt to lead to a confusion between the two distinct provinces of the critic and the moralist. The function of the moralist may be much loftier and more valuable than that of the genuine critic, but it does not lie in the same matter, nor seek the same end. A moralist is concerned with conduct, a critic with intellectual ideas, and the forms of expressing ideas; in other words, with thought and style. It may, indeed, be justly said that a man's conduct is more or less regulated by his ideas, and, by the force of an inevitable reaction, his ideas in turn are powerfully coloured by his conduct. This is quite true. Still, the thoughts are one thing and the conduct is another, and it is proper that they should be looked at from different points of view, and judged in different ways. A man's life and his book may shed some light on one another, but we may have good reason for thinking the book very

excellent and admirable, and the life just the reverse; as, on the other hand, we may revere a man's conduct, and yet deem what he writes and publishes to be the greatest trash in the world. It is the business of two men, or at least of one man in two quite different capacities, to point out whatever may be worth pointing out in the conduct and character of an author, and to show us what is good and bad, lofty and mean, in his writings. The moralist, or the moralizing biographer, does the first, the genuine critic the second. To borrow an illustration from painting. Can we not pronounce a judgment on Turner's landscapes and sea-pieces, until we have first carefully investigated the truth of the stories about his avarice, and his orgies at Wapping, and all the rest of it? Anybody who was writing an essay on Turner's life or character would naturally busy himself with these stories, and, if they were true, might find extenuating circumstances; or, if he could not even do that, might bid the rest of us not to be too ready to throw stones. But a man might write the truest and most instructive criticism upon Turner's pictures, and yet never have known Turner's name or a single incident of his life.

In poetry and history, and every other department of literature and thought, the case is exactly the same. We can judge the work without judging the workman. The critic, as

such, confines himself to the product, and leaves the habits of the producer to the moralist. Take Wordsworth's poems, for instance. If Mr. Carlyle were to write upon them, they would be the text for a vigorous and penetrating essay, not upon the poems at all, but upon the sincerity and honesty of Wordsworth's nature, and upon the rebuke which his simple life conveyed to an artificial and grossly material age. The result would be a piece of moralizing, in which logical flaws enough might be found, but which, on the whole, young men would feel to be very inspiring and elevating. Still this is not criticism. It may be a much finer thing than the fashion in which Lord Jeffrey wrote about Wordsworth; but then Jeffrey was not a moralist, and Mr. Carlyle is not a critic in the sense in which Jeffrey was a critic.

We think, then, that M. Sainte-Beuve's idea tends—and among inferior writers the tendency may be seen very plainly—to extinguish criticism proper, and to substitute for it either pleasant biographical gossip or else a never-ending stream of sermonizing. In France there would be most of the gossip, and among ourselves most of the sermonizing. Instead of examining the thing written, men would all begin to twaddle, either anecdotically or morally, about the writer. The purveyors of little items of the personal history of authors would become the critic's most valuable

auxiliaries. It would be impossible to pronounce upon the worth of the speculations of a philosopher, or the beauty and tenderness of a poet, or the vigour and depth of a satirist, till we had found out how the philosopher, the poet, and the satirist comported themselves in the matters of money and women. As has been admitted, there is something in this view; but, unless vigilantly kept under, it is so pleasant to the indolence of writers who prefer easy gossip about people, and vague fine-sounding generalities about life, to the more troublesome process of seeking truth, that it would soon grow so rank as to conceal the highest and most valuable side of criticism. M. Sainte-Beuve seems to think that the first thing with which a critic ought to busy himself in a book is to discover its origin, to explain how the ideas which it embodies came to enter the head of the author, and, in order to do this, of course he must know all about the author's habits and mode of life. This is all very well in its place, if the author belongs to the small band of men the origin of whose ideas it is at all instructive to seek out. But in no case does it comprise the critic's first duty; and there never was a time when this fact, that merely to "account for" his author's doctrines or style is not the critic's first duty, was in more pressing need of being recognised. And, in using the word "critic," we mean of course as much the

critical reader as the man who writes criticisms for others. If a poem appears, everybody's earliest care seems to be to classify it, to place it in a school, to trace the influences to which the poet has been most susceptible. The question whether the poem is in itself a work of art is looked upon as quite subsidiary. If a philosopher gives birth to a new speculation, the only thing, apparently, with which we need trouble ourselves is to ascertain how he came to conceive such a speculation. The question of its soundness ought only to come before the critic in a dim and imperfect way. About that there is nothing urgent. All the time we forget that, under such conditions, there would be no such thing as criticism. There would be a history of opinion and a history of the various conceptions of beauty; but criticism is the process of answering, as well as the critic's light enables him, the two questions whether this work of art is more beautiful and finished than another, whether this opinion is truer than another. If there is any substance whatever in the conceptions, of Art in one department of literature, and of Truth in another—and the practical worth of the conceptions is quite independent of the great controversy as to there being absolute Truth and absolute Beauty —then every book, from a five-act tragedy to a treatise on logic, is in the first place to be brought up and measured by these standards. To explain

and account for a book being good or bad will generally be interesting and instructive; but it is much more important to us to know whether the ideas which it contains are worth little, or much, or nothing. In order to ascertain this, we need know positively nothing about the writer's dealings in the matters of women and money.

XXII.

LITERARY INDUSTRY.

IT is a common and just complaint that the scholarly temper is decaying from among us, and that the modern conception of life has expanded itself so largely in every other direction as to leave little room for the ancient studious spirit. But the enthusiasm of the student has perhaps not been choked up either quite to the extent or quite in the way assumed by the rough and ready philosophers who parcel out the whole spirit of the age for us in a few trim and apparently exhaustive formulas. The leading journal, for instance, is only, as usual, following vulgar opinion when it tells us that "our own age will leave to posterity less precious monuments of scholarship and research than many which have preceded it." Yet, if we come calmly to the facts of the case,

this Jeremiad proves to be wonderfully gratuitous. Is it true that "many" past ages have left more precious monuments of scholarship and research than will be bequeathed by our own age to posterity? It is difficult, and rather invidious, to make a selection; but nobody will deny that Mr. Grote's History and his work on Plato, and Mr. Merivale's History, and Dean Milman's History, are precious monuments of scholarship and research, and they have all been produced by authors still living, and within the last quarter of a century. Add to these such books as Mr. Maine's "Ancient Law" and Hallam's "History of Literature," and even without taking into account what is, after all, legitimately a work of research—namely, Mr. Mill's masterly treatise on Methods of Reasoning —we have a list of monuments which it would be very surprising if "many" ages could be found to surpass. To what portion of the eighteenth century, for instance, may we look for a series of works so elaborate, so painstaking, so little flashy, so redolent of the toiling scholarly spirit? The colossus of Gibbon, indeed, towers above its stateliest neighbours; but it stands alone, and its superiority in grandeur of design and laborious care of execution is much more visible over its contemporaries than over more modern historical structures. The truth is, that no writer of history has a chance of gaining a footing now without an

accuracy of research with which other ages have been almost utterly unfamiliar. Careful and exhaustive inquiry into facts is more rigorously insisted on now than it ever was. The judgments of the best English critics which exploded the Emperor's recent life of Julius Cæsar may serve as a test of the laborious accuracy of research insisted upon by the stringency of modern scholarship. No modern historian would be listened to who wrote with as slender investigation into his subject as was thought sufficient by the once-extolled Robertson; and if we may pass for a moment to Continental writers, it would be hard in any age to find more "precious monuments" of scholarly labour than M. Amédée Thierry's studies on the Empire, or Sismondi's "History of the Italian Republics." Of German scholarship and research it is unnecessary to say a word. In short, a great deal of this talk is only conventional stuff, which some thoughtless persons first set afloat, and which has since been accepted without any further trouble. It sounds philosophic. No public speaker or writer thinks himself properly equipped until he has laid in a little stock of generalizations about his age, and the more depreciatory they are, within certain limits, the more likely they are to pass muster. One morning we learn that "we live in an age of false and unreal science," simply because two or three professors

talk rather wildly about the franchise at a congress. Then, the next day, it appears that we live in an age which is ignorant of scholarship, and slovenly in research, simply because so many people like reading novels and light magazines. It is a great pity that professors should sometimes talk nonsense; and if all the young ladies who read sensation stories would, but for the sensation stories, have spent the time in scholarship and research, why, perhaps that too is a great pity. But it is much too bad to lay hold of the professors, and a mob of lazy folks in the hours of their recreation at the seaside or after dinner, and call them the Age.

Although, however, among authors of the highest rank the average of scholarship and research is probably higher than it ever was, and though there is every reason to think that writers of this rank are more numerous than they ever were, there is still a sense in which modern influences are unfavourable to the scholarly mind, and this in two tolerably plain ways. In the first place, everybody with sufficient earnestness to have made an old-fashioned student has now-a-days always got a theory of life. We are all more or less smitten with admiration of a popular and ideal character, who is supposed really to make the best of life that can be made of it. No theory of life is now tolerable which does not bring out equally

all the good sides of human nature, both purely intellectual and moral. A man with a theory of life must exhibit a little of everything. His understanding should be exercised on all the subjects on which the human understanding has ever been engaged. He must know some history and some philosophy, ancient and modern. He must be capable of enjoying sonatas and symphonies, painting and architecture, and of discriminating mildly between various styles and epochs and masters. An indispensable smattering of poetry will temper the no less indispensable smattering of political economy. The perfect man must also have travelled, and seen the manners of many men and many cities. For the same reason, that "he may know all qualities with a learned spirit of human dealings," he must take a part in public duties, and discharge the functions of the citizen. Then his emotions are to be developed with equal completeness; so he marries and has a family, and loves his wife very much in one way, and his children very much in another way. Besides all this, he must be occasionally contemplative, and must meditate from time to time on the stars and the sea, and on human misery and the general mysteriousness of all things.

Such a life as this is delightful to think about, and the ideal is not at all too difficult for mortal attainment, especially for anybody

with a moderate competency. But it is not the scholar's life, and it does not countenance the scholar's fashion of looking at things. Anybody with a theory of life smiles with easy contempt as he reads of the prodigious and almost incredible industry of Bayle, and of Joseph Scaliger spending two years in the seclusion of his room, reading nothing but Greek. Where were their emotions all this time, and their public duties, and their contemplations of the sea and stars? How did they live without exercise, and morning baths, and a summer trip? To the self-conscious man, always troubling himself to live in harmony with Infinity and Nature and Eternity, and to develop all his moral and intellectual muscles equally, this life for the acquisition and digestion and reproduction of knowledge is altogether abnormal, and a waste of forces and faculties. From this point of view, the enthusiastic scholar is even worse off than the enthusiastic man of science. The scientific man does, indeed, develop himself excessively on one side; but then, by his discoveries and inventions, he contributes something tangible and plainly useful to the common stock, while the scholar gets nothing for his toil but what looks like barren knowledge and unremunerative ideas.

And the scholar fares not worse with these earnest and equal-development people, than with

those others whose simple and beautiful theory of life teaches that nothing in the world is worth having. What is the good of worrying oneself about past events, and people who are dead and gone ages since, and the growth of ideas, in a world where all is vanity and weariness?

But the two counter-theories, that life is worth nothing, and that it is worth everything and can only be properly employed in hunting after everything, are not the only discouragements thrown by prevailing ideas upon literary industry. More powerful than any hostile theory is the attractive spectacle of the pleasures which wealth secures, and which the most thoughtful and industrious of scholars may be pardoned for coveting. The fact that lovers of books are no longer slovenly in their clothes, careless about their persons, and generally irregular and uncouth in their habits, is in itself not so favourable to the undivided supremacy of the literary passion as one might suppose. The man of letters is not cold-blooded, and the cultivation of taste in lower matters than poetry becomes costly. The increasing wealth of his neighbours enables them to gratify abundantly any number of those elegant likings for which even the most studious may have a sympathy. He may read twelve hours a day and still be susceptible of a desire to have good pictures in his rooms, and good wine on his table, and good

service, to gratify him during the hours which are left. But good pictures and delicate wines and neat servants cost money, and reading twelve hours a day is not in all cases the surest way to make money. And so it comes to pass that people with modest independent incomes abandon their studious pursuits, and go into business to treble or quadruple their modest incomes. They prefer a handsomely furnished house and plenty of graceful luxuries to the tamer delights of reading and thinking. Of course, the old dreams of literature are ever present with them, and when a certain amount of money has been realized, the plans that have been maturing with time are to be diligently carried out. A man with plans of this sort is probably a better kind of man than one who has never had any such plans, and thinks very slightingly of them; but they come to no more in one case than the other. Just the same thing happens to writers of books. They, too, want some of the elegances which surround the lives of richer men; so they fall away from what they might have been, and write books whose only merit in the author's eyes is that they pay—books very often twice accursed, for in a mild way they curse both him that writes and him that reads. Just on the same principle, painters and musicians paint and compose rubbish, to catch the market. It is all very well to give hard names to conduct of this sort, and to

call it prostitution. So it is prostitution, and it ought to be put down as much as possible by everybody who has any influence; and if men of this temper come forward and demand for their trashy "pot-boilers" in art or literature the title of pieces of art, they ought to be sedulously snubbed and trampled upon. Only it is of no use to set up a literary midnight-meeting movement for these poor fallen creatures, and to serve out to them the weak tea and innutritious bread-and-butter of sympathetic and feebly hortatory criticism. Though it is the business of the honest critic, as far as he can, sternly to drive these noxious works from the public eye, there is really some excuse for their authors. They are fond of the elegant but costly adornments of life exactly as their neighbours are, so they produce hasty and bad work. They are a public nuisance. They corrupt the taste of the time, and fill the earth, in the way of books and pictures, with a spurious and hateful brood. But, after all, they are not worse than any other people who shut their eyes to what is most worth having, or else, seeing the better course and approving it, follow the worse.

Still it is pleasanter and more profitable to contemplate the very different examples of men who loved letters for their own sake, and on their account were willing to "scorn delights and live laborious days." The delights are excellent in

their place. The more of the graces of life a man can surround himself with, the luckier he is; but before them comes what Milton calls "industrious and select reading." Milton himself enjoyed the "neat repast, light and choice, of Attic taste, with wine;" the "lute well-touched or artful voice warbling immortal notes and Tuscan air." But then he "spared to interpose them oft." They were only the decorations of life; the life itself was patient industry among poets and philosophers, an eager pursuit of all the wise and graceful things that had ever been said or thought. It is the lack of this persevering industry in its votaries from which literature is in any age most likely to suffer, though the danger is no closer now than at any other time. A poet of the second order, for instance, frequently remains stationary for this reason. He fears to check the flow of his natural inspiration—to distort the bent and weaken the force of his natural genius. He does not see that a knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of mankind, only to be got by study of the writings of others, is a rich supplement to original observation, which no poet can dispense with if he would traverse the whole length and breadth of human nature. And it is the same throughout literature. The industrious study of other authors is the surest preventive against that washiness, and thinness, and languor, which are sure to beset an incautious or

unfortified writer in an age when there is a downright flood of writing. Pliny the Elder, when in the country, never relaxed reading or being read to, except at the moment when he was in the bath, and even while he was being rubbed dry he either listened or dictated. His nephew on one occasion ventured to take a walk, but was admonished by his uncle that he "need not have lost those hours." This is carrying studiousness to an extreme, possibly, but still it gives a notion of close and unremitting industry which is rather stimulating. Instances of this tremendous appetite for literary labour are worth dwelling on at a time when men are apt to be diverted from the vigorous pursuit of letters of the highest and most scholarly kind, not merely by indolence, which is not the vice of the time, but by a taste for graceful luxuries, or else by an attractive though extremely fallacious dilettantism.

XXIII.

NINETEENTH CENTURY SADNESS.

THE volume of letters arranged and published by the faithful M. Trebutien will scarcely affect in any way the estimate which people have already formed of the character and place of Eugénie de Guérin. The letters are a fainter echo of the voice of the journal. They bring out no unfamiliar trait, nor represent in any new light the characteristics which were already known to us. The gracefulness of style, so attractive even to those who think the admiration paid to the character of the writer excessive, is as prominent in the letters as in the journal. Even by a foreigner, the exquisite rhythm, the delicate turns of expression, may be appreciated with a nicety commonly reserved for melody and delicacy in his own tongue. Whatever varieties of opinion there may be as to the

homage which one or two critics have paid to the memory of Eugénie de Guérin, the unrivalled purity and simplicity of her nature are beyond dispute. It is this brilliant purity which shines through her style, and lends to her words a glowing and transparent warmth. In her letters, the charm lies not so much in their merely literary power as in the unrhetorical sincerity and singlemindedness of which her style is so exact an expression. Speaking of the "Imitation," she calls it a book which man, in whatever case, would read with good fruit. "I would recommend it to the sick, to those who are happy in the world, to those who are the prey of sombre despair; nay, Judas, if he had read it, could not have gone and hanged himself." We feel that here is no violent attempt to say something forcible, but a natural and vivid illustration of the comfort which the writer herself had found in that famous book. Even people so reserved and frigid as Englishmen are in expressing their most cordial friendship may read Eugénie de Guérin's overflowing protestations of affection towards her friends without repugnance, or perhaps with a measure of sympathy which surprises themselves. Everybody feels instinctively that neither is her enthusiasm affected nor her utterance of it an empty trick of exaggerated language. In a letter to Mademoiselle Louise de Bayne, the most intimate of her friends, she says, "I seize, when-

ever I can, the delight of writing to you; mind, not whenever I wish, for that would be often, every moment, always; but we cannot pass life in enjoyments. A thousand things claim us; we have not too much time for housekeeping, walks, darning, spinning, a little reading, prayer, and now and then writing. But to love you, and to tell you that I love you, I reckon among my regular occupations." On another occasion she exclaims to Mademoiselle de Bayne—"I am never weary of thanking you for all the amitiés, tendresses, amabilités, raretés, nouveautés, douceurs, that your heart sends to me." The English language refuses to translate an expansiveness so elaborate. But, for all that, Eugénie de Guérin's effusion is so delicate, so free from tinsel, as to possess an irresistible attraction for the stiffest and most reticent nature. Her letters are admirable in style because they display the purest and most refined taste without the suspicion of even unconscious artifice. In even the best sort of correspondence, just as in books, one commonly discovers at bottom a deep vein of self-consciousness, and hence the delight with which, as has been well said, we find "instead of an author a human being." Eugénie de Guérin confessed that at the bottom of every human soul there is "un peu de limon," but of few persons was this so little true as of herself. If in every soul there must be some sediment of what is evil

and petty to disturb its clearness, at least in hers there was the smallest possible portion.

While the letters are as graceful in style and as full of rhythm as the journal, they are equally marked by the same peculiarities of thought and feeling. Indeed, Mademoiselle de Guérin's character was too coherent to permit any discrepancies between what she said to herself and Maurice, and what she said to her friends. If her journal reveals a woman to whom life was only one long weariness, she was scarcely less frank in disclosing her burden to nearly all with whom she corresponded. And much as one may revere the tenderness and simplicity of her nature, it is impossible to conceal that her whole theory of life, her way of looking at all the circumstances around her, was profoundly morbid and unwholesome. The enthusiastic critics who have made her name so familiar to us seem to have left this too much out of sight. In their eagerness to do justice to her graces—to what M. Sainte-Beuve, and, after him, Mr. Arnold, have called her *distinction*—they have forgotten her lack of strength and vigour, and have even represented her spirit of despairing resignation as something which our own times are much in need of. The resignation of Eugénie de Guérin was no quiet or philosophic admission that there is a great deal in life, nay that even life itself is, altogether

mysterious and beyond all hope of our comprehending. She does recognise this, but it is with a temper which just misses being downright rebellious, because hers was one of those natures which, as Pascal says, judge of religion by the heart, as others judge it by the understanding.

She does indeed escape being rebellious, but, after all, she scarcely adopts the neat cut-and-dried theory of the universe which students bring away from theological colleges. "If we had not the idea of Providence," she says in one of her letters, "we should be ready to say that the world goes all awry, but it is ourselves rather who do not see straight; we complain, and are full of fear, as if God was not there. Let us not forget that it is He and not man who leads us, for otherwise we might well despair and set out like Columbus in search of another world." Her instinctive piety saved her from believing that the world does really go awry, but a passage like this shows that the opposite belief had presented itself very clearly to her as a possible alternative. Her fleeting suspicion that life is a network of inextricable blunders combined with her firm persuasion that the mighty maze is not without a plan to make her deeply and incurably morbid.

In fact, the only safeguard for the minds who love to reflect habitually on the confusions and miseries in which man is bound is Mr. Carlyle's

"Gospel of Labour." Eugénie de Guérin had no adequate outlet in this direction. She fancied she saw that everything is vanity on earth, and so she made her account solely with things beyond the earth. It is neither untrue nor irreverent to say, therefore, that her life, as far as this world goes, was melancholy and wasted. In no sense did she get the best out of it that she could and ought to have got. Her life was wasted, not because she did no practical and lasting work, not because she did not found a hospital, or produce a large family, or evangelize navvies, but because she persistently viewed the world through a distorted medium.

It has been said of all mankind, *Victuri semper agimus nec vivimus unquam.* Emphatically we may say of Eugénie that she was ever expecting life, but never lived. She never made the best of her nature. "We are very busy with our household affairs; with one thing and another the day is taken up, life passes away, then will come heaven, I trust." This is the general burden of all her letters. Life is a phase to be endured, and that is all. "For the time," she writes on one occasion, "we are all pretty happy; our patient cured, friends charming, music, singing, laughter, an air of joy on every face; everything goes so well that I am in constant dread of something happening; it is wrong to trust in happi-

ness." Her highest pleasure is "to console those who weep." In point of religious dogma, the gulf between Eugénie de Guérin and the Puritan is wide enough; but if we for a moment strip aside her tenderness, her poetic temper, and the rest, we find that her philosophy, though not her religion, is strangely identical with the philosophy of Puritanism. For instance, she does "not believe that we ought to think so much of our bodily health as to become slaves for its sake, or that we ought to take care of the body at the expense of the soul." Not only is the body to be despised, but even reading, writing—in short, all things in which she detects herself taking pleasure —are practices to be checked or discontinued. The most rigid of Puritans could not more resolutely set his face against secular joys than Eugénie de Guérin did at certain epochs, and was inclined to do always. The latter, it is true, never abuses the world, and, so far as we can remember, does not once mention that evil abode of fallen souls which the former so delighted to contemplate. The Puritan hated cakes and ale because he feared hell. Eugénie de Guérin had no taste for them because she had ever before her eyes her own idea of heaven, and with this all other happiness seemed to jar. But both of them thought this life a mistake, and, while one became

sour and malignant, the other became weary and depressed. "Winter brings me no pleasure," says Mademoiselle de Guérin at seven-and-twenty, "except the delicious warmth of the chimney-corner, and that is a pleasure that belongs to the old. What a long way from the doll to the fire-place! And I've got there already! Then will come spectacles, a stick, loss of teeth—sad New Year gifts! So, since time has ceased to bring me any pleasure, I would fain dismiss this New Year's Day as a tiresome visitor who returns too often. As you say, it is wonderful how people can feel so merry at this season. Let children be merry, if they will; they get sweatmeats, but we . . ." Here the sentence ends. The writer had got to the end of her philosophy. But she feared to express it in the words of the oldest teacher of such philosophy, the Hebrew Preacher who said, "Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me."

And Eugénie de Guérin hated life. But the transcendental critics who insist on the beauty of her example in a Benthamite age forget that this weary kind of contempt for all that the world has to offer may breed two widely-opposed sets of practical consequences. A persuasion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit may make a person a pious and contemplative recluse, or it may cause

him to echo the voice of the Preacher, who "commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat and to drink and be merry." The letters of Eugénie de Guérin and the ninth chapter of Ecclesiastes may be taken respectively to represent the opposite sides of the paralysing doctrine that "at the bottom of everything lies emptiness and nothingness." A theory so violently in conflict as this with both the dictates of a healthy nature and the exigencies of actual life literally draws the sap out of the character of anybody who sincerely holds it. Every one must see that all progress and improvement would be indefinitely slackened if the philosophy of Eugénie de Guérin were as widely and as fervently admired as the transcendentalists maintain that it ought to be. If human happiness is once fully admitted to be all moonshine and nonsense, why should people take any pains to promote it? It may be said that one's philosophy of life practically makes very little difference; but when a person is held up as a type of rare virtue "whose influence the world ends by receiving and by undergoing its law," it is impossible not to see that the truly vital point is such a person's general theory of the ends of existence. In the case of Eugénie de Guérin, her theory was as morbid and as fatal to the largest kind of human excellence as any that ever

was invented. After all, there is some truth in the verse that—

> Bonne ou mauvaise santé
> Fait notre philosophie;

and in reading Eugénie de Guérin one is always inclined to repeat Voltaire's note on Pascal's exclamation that man is but a chimera—"*Vrai discours de malade!*"

There is another side on which Eugénie de Guérin's weakness is certainly not blamable, but which at all events disentitles her to be considered one of the most elevated types of modern character. It would be very foolish to make it a ground of serious depreciation of a woman that she never suspected that those who stray from the fold of her own religion may have a shade of right on their side. But still many women have acquired this crowning virtue, and have displayed that breadth and intellectual sense of justice which is the very salt of the human mind. We may gladly recognise the beauty and earnestness of Eugénie de Guérin's faith; but is faith the most important or valuable quality that the world at present requires? Surely the question of the truth of a belief is the most needful point to be satisfied, and, if this be so, whatever influence the memory of Eugénie de Guérin may acquire will be thus far in the wrong direction.

Perhaps, after all, the most instructive thing to be extracted from these hundred and fifty letters is the picture they present of a thoroughly pious and devout person who yet does not think abuse of the world, and denunciation of its pleasures and business, the most essential part of religion. "Ah!" she exclaims to one of her correspondents, "if people only knew what religion is, they would neither be so afraid, nor speak so ill, of it; it is the balm of life, and yet perhaps in the world they fancy that it is made up of bitterness, of harshness, of savagery; but, believe me, nothing is so gentle, so pliant, so affectionate as a religious soul. I know some persons of this kind who would endure anything, forgive anything, love anything, who are capable of whatever is lofty, and noble, and generous—people who would be the admiration of the world, if the world only knew them. This I have noticed from my youngest days, and it is this which has filled me with love and veneration for the religion which produces such good and gentle creatures." She is as profoundly delighted as the *Record* would have been because she meets a geologist who "turns all his discoveries and studies to the good of the faith, and proves that science and faith, geology and Genesis, agree." But her devotion does not freeze and harden her. At the wedding of her brother she confesses that she danced, but not at

all as an English *dévote* would have confessed it. "It was absolutely necessary on such an occasion," as she charmingly apologizes, "and besides, I could not have refused without being remarked, and being left in solitary *ennui* on my bench." "I had no idea what a ball was like; after all, it is a very pleasant piece of childishness." One cannot help feeling, through the letters which describe how she enjoyed Paris and all its bustle, that the one thing wanting to perfect all her sweetness and virtue was a larger sphere of practical duty, a wider outlook. Of course a shallower nature would have soon succumbed and grown stolid before the narrowness of a life like that of Eugénie de Guérin. She fretted at this narrowness, but it could not quench the overflowing tenderness and graces of her character. Still it prevented their perfect and healthy development.

XXIV.

THE WEAKNESS OF PUBLIC OPINION.

AMONG the numerous grounds for national complacency which the newspapers discover for us, and which every morning at breakfast we roll as savoury morsels under the tongue, none is more conspicuous or more delightful than the irresistible might of public opinion in this favoured land. It is very pleasant to find that, in spite of wars and cotton famines, our exports and imports range higher than they ever did. We feel a proud satisfaction in learning that, in spite of the reduction of ever so many taxes and the abolition of ever so many others, the revenue is even more copious than usual. And when we read the solemn admonitions and warnings dealt forth to wicked Continental Powers, that if they do not leave the evil of their ways they will actually forfeit the sympathies of

England, lives there a man with soul so dead as not to feel elated with himself and his native land? But none of these things move us so mightily as the ceaseless panegyrics upon the majesty of public opinion. To public opinion, we were told a short time ago, "Ministers, Parliament, Judges, newspapers, must pay obedience, under the penalty of a sensible diminution of their influence and consideration; it is a tribunal which has no fixed place of meeting, no defined or recognised organ, no code of law, no formal procedure, but its sentences are as authoritatively and implicitly obeyed as those of the highest courts of judicature in the land." A man's heart swells in his bosom as he reflects that he too has a share of this supreme mysterious power, and can contribute something to the formation of these authoritative sentences which bind Cabinet Ministers and leading journals. It is almost a cruelty to hint that this belief is perhaps a little stronger than the facts warrant, or that in many matters the sovereignty of public opinion is about as substantial as Sancho Panza's governorship of Barataria. Still it must be worth while to weigh the nature of this authoritative and implicit obedience; though, by the way, how on earth can we be said to obey anything authoritatively?

The truth is, that one can scarcely stir a step in any direction without coming across an instance in

which public opinion is most royally defied. Is there a single being in the three kingdoms, except the vergers, who would venture for a moment to justify or excuse the way in which people are prevented from going into the chapels of Westminster Abbey, unless accompanied by a garrulous or surly attendant and a party of gaping sight-seers? Here is an abuse and a nuisance for which not a single word can be said, and for which nobody even tries to get up a decent argument. Public opinion is absolutely unanimous about it. That tribunal which has no defined organ and no formal procedure has passed its sentence without reserve. The sentence has been passed, too, for years and years. If anybody wishes to see a truly implicit obedience to the verdict, such as would be given to that of the "highest court of judicature in the land," let him travel as far as Westminster, and try to go through Henry the Seventh's Chapel alone, and without paying sixpences. We wonder what the Court of Chancery would say if an injunction were treated with the same cool contempt with which the injunction of public opinion is treated by the most impudent vergers in Europe.

Again, anybody who would like to see this unseen but irresistible power in vigorous exercise could not do better than make a careful study of all the phenomena of railway management. Public opinion has long ago protested most emphatically

against the system of exposing people for a couple of hours on a stretch to the risk of being burnt alive, or robbed, or ravished, or having their throats cut, or being tossed out of the window, without any chance of rescue. Public opinion has long and steadily demanded that smoking carriages should be put on to every train, and that signalmen and switchers should not be made to work sixteen or seventeen hours a day for as many shillings a week, and that irresponsible platelayers should not have the power of destroying the line for a few hours whenever the whim seizes them. The profound deference, the respectful compliance, paid by managers and directors to the irresistible verdict is evidently quite wonderful. The venerable public might as well have whistled against the wind. The effect of angry remonstrance and tranquil argument is alike nugatory. The managers and directors don't care an iota for public opinion, any more than M. Haussmann or Count Bismark or the Sultan of Turkey or a Westminster verger, and railways are conducted just as if there were no such force as public opinion in existence. Then, take the case of local Boards of Health and similar bodies. A virulent epidemic is anticipated, and the public is indescribably anxious that every measure of precaution should be adopted. But this counts for nothing with a local board of the usual stamp. Fever dens

and open miasmatic drains and stagnant pestilential pools continue, as before, to exist in the richest abundance.

In all these cases, the public opinion which proves so utterly powerless is unanimous. There is nobody at all on the side of the vergers and the railway people and the indolent or stingy Board of Health. The public opinion which condemns them and their ways is no mere popular gust, but a steady and unceasing current. Yet it is even more interesting to observe the cases in which public opinion is divided—where one portion of the public think very strongly one way, and another portion think very strongly in precisely the opposite way. There is no lack of instances in which all the educated opinion is on one side, and most of the ignorant opinion on the other. To which of the two is it that Ministers and newspapers pay "authoritative" obedience—to the thoughtful and educated few, or the ignorant and hasty many, who can give no reason for the various faiths that are in them? Everybody who takes the trouble to read the accounts of the proceedings at the London police-courts, for example, knows that scarcely a day passes without some man being brought up for brutal violence to a woman. The punishments which the law inflicts upon these ruffians are so light and of such a kind that the ruffians are scarcely at all affected by

them. And they are, moreover, so ingeniously contrived that the unfortunate woman is more severely punished than her brutal mate, for she is left without subsistence during his imprisonment. It is admitted that a sound flogging would do more to check these atrocious brutalities than any amount of imprisonment. In the case of garotters, the lash was, though with much difficulty, made a lawful punishment; but the systematic wife-beater is carefully protected by the public opinion of the ignorant and thoughtless. Ignorant people are always the most sentimental, and sentiment carries the day over all the force of educated opinion. Whipping a man is the method of a barbarous age. It degrades and humiliates the poor soul. It destroys that manly and fearless independence which is the birthright of every Briton. The person, the temple of the immortal soul, is too sacred to be touched with violent hands. So, by way of protecting the sanctity of the bodily temple, the wretches are encouraged in the laudable custom of battering the carcases of their wives once or twice a week. Here, it is true, the Legislature and some of the newspapers do pay an implicit obedience to public opinion, but then it is to the silliest and noisiest fraction of it only.

Just the same occurs with reference to all propositions for reducing the evils which flow over all classes of the community from prostitution.

No proposition for removing these evils, which demands a recognition of their source and fount, has a chance of getting a trial. Public opinion stands obstinately in the way—that is, the opinion of those who have had no training whatever in all the habits which are the only possible security that the opinion shall be a sound one. Educated public opinion is denounced as the odious product of a cold and cynical devotion to mere intellect, while the other sort bubbles up clear and fresh from the divine spring of popular instinct. That kind of public opinion is a great deal too strong which binds us in the fetters of Judaism, and is full of tender sympathy with murderers, provided they are only wicked enough, and which is more opposed than the Inquisition itself to anything like a liberal and unconfined expansion of the human mind.

Hence it is pretty evident that our joy on being told that this country is not as other countries are, but is the unrivalled scene of the free play of public opinion, should be tempered by two considerations—first, that in many points public opinion is quite powerless; and secondly, that in some of the things in which its power is most sensibly felt it is exerted in a direction which every thoughtful person must hold to be most pernicious. Then it is said, and with justice, that, as time advances, public opinion will become both

better and stronger. But the rate of this progress depends upon a great many conditions, and upon nothing more decidedly than upon the number of those who may be found courageous enough to refuse to bow the knee to public opinion. The more eagerly we deify this great force, the less likely we are either to amend its quality or to increase its weight in the national affairs. The more grounds we have for congratulating ourselves that, in this country at least, public opinion is deferentially and implicitly served, the less desirable is it that such congratulations should be loudly and incessantly dinnedinto the public ear.

This Pharisaic habit of thanking God that we are not as Frenchmen and Prussians and Americans are has become horribly wearisome. Admitting that we are the wisest and best of mankind, the salt of the earth, the single pure and righteous nation—granting that our exports and imports are the most amazing thing the world ever saw, and that the power of our public opinion is absolutely sovereign and undisputed—still it is possible to get tired of one's own praises. We may be the model and pattern for the nations, but is there no room for improvement in the model itself? It is not a particularly pleasant thing to have a slave in our chariot, always reminding us of our imperfections, but a sensible man would rather hear the warning voice of the slave than the whispers of

never-ending adulation. It would be very absurd for anybody to blind himself to the fact that within the last thirty or forty years a great improvement has taken place in public opinion. A great many excellent reforms have been brought about in every department of social and political life; but then the wisdom and virtue of public opinion were in the first instance, and for a long time, opposed to them, or else they would have taken place long before. Those who live fifty years hence, and look back upon the opinion of to-day, will scarcely think that the repeated and extravagant eulogies upon it were wholly called for. Every reform, it should be remembered, has been carried out in spite of hostile public opinion at one time or another. The best thing that one can say of the public opinion of a given day and country is that it is not hard and crystallized, but open and expansive and pliant. Whether to dwell with unwearied perseverance on the fact of our own country being the best of all possible countries is the surest way of promoting this pliancy and expansion, may very well be doubted.

XXV.

PAGAN PATRIOTISM.

MR. KINGLAKE, in criticising the conduct of Mr. Bright at the time of the Crimean war, incidentally pointed out that two very distinct sentiments are included under the common name of love of country. In one sense, a man may be said to love his country when the efforts of his life—in the legislature, in his county, in his factory, or in his writings—are directed to the promotion of social improvements, and the enlightenment of the community. In this acceptation of the term, patriotism may evince itself in procuring the passing of a Factory Act, in the negotiation of a commercial treaty, in persuading a provincial corporation to adopt some improved plan of drainage, or in the more objectionable form of a Sunday Beer Bill. But we feel that, by a lover of his country, every-

body means something more than the man whose pulse quickens over the sewage question, or who waxes enthusiastic in hindering respectable people from doing as they please. Those whose love for their country takes this shape are often found to be without the very sentiment which underlies the conventional notion of the patriot. As Mr. Kinglake said of the member for Birmingham, if in this sense they love their country, in the other they detest it.

The second, or pagan, kind of patriotism is a more universal characteristic than the first, which is, in fact, what is otherwise termed public spirit. It may be described as love of country for the mere sake of its traditions and associations, for what it is and what it has been. The philosophic patriot loves his country as a seat of civilization and a field for the development of virtue, and less for what it is, or has been, than for what he hopes to make it. The pagan patriot, if he does not exactly care for none of these things, at least regards them as secondary in importance and interest to the historical grandeur of his country in the face of the world. It would be a source of permanent vexation to him if it were ever discovered that Hume, and Goldsmith, and Mrs. Markham, have all been mistaken about Crecy and Agincourt, and that the French had beaten us after all, instead of our having beaten them. The Norman conquest is an unpalatable

subject with him, but he finds consolation in discovering that the Normans were not exactly Frenchmen. Joan of Arc is his secret abomination, and he curses the ill fortune which carried off Henry V. before he had time to fill the French throne. His blood boils as he listens to Victor Hugo's conclusive demonstration that English troops and the English general had nothing to do with the victory of Waterloo, but were merely the passive instruments of Napoleonic destiny. Among the classes which do not commonly study history this sentiment assumes the form of a definite creed, and a bricklayer on a Saturday night is prepared to break the head of anybody who should deny that Frenchmen live upon frogs, that their average height is between four and five feet, or that one Englishmen can thrash six of them at once. In this last case, patriotism is merely one form of ignorance, and ranks with the conviction current in the same quarters that the Pope of Rome is constantly on the watch for an opportunity of blowing up with gunpowder the Queen and the English parliament. It was rudely illustrated by the too frank Briton who, when the courteous Frenchman had assured him that if he were not a Frenchman he would choose to be an Englishman, replied that if he were not an Englishman he would wish to be one. But patriotism, as ordinarily understood, is also found in combination

with large intelligence, and a more than common amount of enlightenment. It is notorious that, at the time of the *Trent* outrage, nearly everybody throughout the community would have demanded even a war with America, with all the suffering and loss that such a calamity would have entailed, rather than tolerate a deliberate insult; and Lord Palmerston was ejected from office, on the occasion of the Conspiracy to Murder Bill, simply through the operation of a similar feeling. It will be readily perceived how such patriotism comes to be styled pagan; not by way of stigma, but as indicating that it generally produces a course of conduct not literally consistent with the Christian injunction to offer the right cheek to him who smote the left. There is, indeed, a school of politicians who systematically assail this kind of patriotism on this precise ground; but as they are not particularly eager upon the subject except when their trade is likely to be affected, those who have listened to them come to the natural conclusion that Christianity with them is an elegant euphemism for cash, and that they stigmatize as pagan every sentiment or attitude which is not commercially remunerative. But besides being, in one sense, slightly unchristian, patriotism is also apt to be curiously unreasonable. There were many in England, at the time of the Crimean war, who thoroughly disapproved of that war, but there were

very few who did not rejoice over such victories as were won in it by British valour. In the view of logic, this is manifestly indefensible. If a war is being waged contrary to justice, or, what is the same thing, to expediency, every success ought in reason to disgust those who have been wise enough to perceive the true character of the contest, and independent enough to dare to condemn it. And yet the result shows plainly that this is not so. Even that not uninfluential section of the French nation which dwells in Leicester Square, and which abhors the Emperor, his policy, his army, and all that is his, did not dissemble its satisfaction at the victories of Magenta and Solferino. That patriotism is something which neither religion nor logic can control, is, however, a truth which does not call for much illustration.

On this account, love of country is sometimes regarded as an instinct; but modern thought refuses to refer to instinct what may be traced to more obvious causes, and patriotism may quite as readily be explained without its aid as any particular form of religious superstition. It is a natural thing that we should love our country more warmly than any other place, just as men generally love their parents better than strangers. Both education and interest reasonably attach us to it in the first instance, and the attachment is sanctified by authority and association. The reason why

politicians of a certain school are condemned as unpatriotic, and disliked accordingly, is not that they were born without a certain human instinct, but that they have rudely and ostentatiously divested themselves of a set of associations which the vast majority of men around them are delighted to cherish. Love of country in our pagan sense is a prejudice, but it belongs to that respectable class of prejudices with which the world sympathises. M. Montrond said he liked Talleyrand because he had no prejudices, but most people would have found this a very sufficient ground for detesting Talleyrand, and so long as human nature remains in its present phase prejudices must occupy a prominent place in its composition. The citizen of the world is nowhere a very popular character. In uprooting what appear to him mere prejudices, he is very liable to damage what other people are weak enough to consider principles; and cosmopolitanism is commonly only a fine name for an airy kind of selfishness. Men of the stamp of Captain Wragge, cultivators of the great moral field of humanity, are our genuine type of cosmopolites—persons who scorn to narrow their public affections within the straitened bounds of a love for their own country, but traverse Europe with sham projects of newspapers, societies, and mines. Not a little of that religious cosmopolitanism with which London annually reeks in the month of May is a

similar expansion of folly and imposture; and those pious denizens of Exeter Hall who applaud garbled and mendacious reports of societies for cutting down the human mind to their own stunted dimensions, are far too good, far too vast in their sympathies, to be patriotic. A third body of citizens of the world protest that they would as gladly live in one country as another—that there is as much genuine liberty in France, in Austria, or in America, as in England. Whether England is destined soon to disappear from her place among Great Powers is to them a matter of sublime indifference; if London were sacked by the French, Paris and Vienna would not be a whit less pleasant. This vagabonish cynicism is perhaps the least offensive of the forms which contempt for patriotism assumes, for the simple reason that, in ninety-nine out of a hundred men who are weak enough to profess it, it is a mere affectation of a philosophy which they do not understand. We admit that the spectacle of an agricultural association, full of much heavy beef and strong ale, hiccuping forth spasmodic cheers for "Our glorious Constitution" is far from being impressive; and there is something unquestionably ludicrous in the prevalent custom among Orange Societies of getting blind drunk once a-year over the pious and immortal memory of King William III. At the period of a general election,

he who scoffs at patriotism may find ample encouragement to persist in his doctrine. As he leaves the candidate on the hustings protesting his incorruptible devotion to his country, and apparently inspired by that sentiment to a degree amounting to passion, and then finds the "man in the moon," or other mysterious being, busily engaged in the purchase of costly pigs or hens from free and independent electors, or giving directions for the summary seizure and imprisonment of pledged but intoxicated voters, he may be disposed to pray heaven to deliver him from a country of patriots. But this virtue would never be assumed unless it involved a certain number of respectable qualities; and after all, whatever means he may resort to in order to secure his seat, the member of parliament will, in the main, when he has once gained it, be really guided by patriotic motives; that is to say, he will be animated by a more or less intelligent attachment to the honour and interests of his own country in preference to those of all the world besides. And though we may laugh at the farmer's after-dinner enthusiasm, in justice it is well to remember that when the appeal is made from Philip drunk to Philip sober, he is quite willing to back his enthusiasm with abundance of money for men, ships, and fortifications.

Love of country, like all other good motives, is

most pleasant to contemplate in its practical manifestations, and we naturally think more highly of it when evincing itself in bravery and energy than in the mere making of speeches. But there are times which do not demand or permit this active display. At the present moment in England, for example, there is not much room for any effective demonstration of pagan patriotism. It is at such intervals that it makes way for the kindred but distinct sentiment of public spirit. Perhaps the most inspiriting moments in the history of a nation are those in which the two unite—when men sacrifice themselves for their country, not only because their country is bound to them by ties of natural association, but because it represents some valuable principle. The citizens of the Free Towns of Flanders, in their persevering contests with powerful enemies, are probably the most remarkable instance in history of the operation of this double motive—fighting as they did both for the future independence and commercial prosperity of their native cities, and also for the sake of the old associations with which they were invested.

It may be noticed, finally, that though patriotism of the pagan kind is an honourable prejudice, and one whose absence is in most cases accompanied by the absence of many confessedly desirable qualities of another sort, it still remains a preju-

dice, and therefore demands a more than ordinarily vigilant supervision. The man of thought and culture will generally be adequately protected by his very character against any rash or vulgar demonstration of this sentiment; but as the mass of people are neither thoughtful nor cultivated, they are peculiarly liable to be hurried by it into fits of unreasonable passion. What pagan patriotism, even in a bastard form, can dare if untempered by a critical wisdom, and how it drags people into as utter an abnegation of principle as the most unscrupulous cosmopolitanism could do, is evidenced in the conduct of the "War Christians" in America. And this brings us to the gist of the whole matter. Love of country is only valuable to mankind in so far as it constitutes a motive for the defence of a true principle. Coleridge's aphorism, that he who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will end by loving himself better than either, is equally valid and equally forcible if we read "country" for "Christianity" and "justice" for "truth." Justice is the cardinal virtue of man as a member of society, and a reverence for it is not to be overthrown with impunity even by what is in itself the most creditable of prejudices.

XXVI.

OCCASIONAL CYNICISM.

THERE can be nothing much more interesting to the student of human character than to watch the different shapes that are constantly being assumed, at different times, by the old feeling of the worthlessness of all our aims and objects of endeavour. This is one of the very few convictions which, in some form and at one time or another, come home to all the world. Nobody is so buoyant or so dull, so sunk in self-indulgence or so elevated by self-denial, as to be entirely unsusceptible of the chilling persuasion that all the works that are done under the sun are vanity and vexation of spirit. The degrees of susceptibility range between very widely distant points—from the hide-bound Pharisee, who is barely open to these uncomfortable impressions at all, up to the professed cynic, who has reached the truly

delightful conclusion that "the whole thing," by which he means life and all its interests, is a sheer mistake and piece of confusion. As it presents itself to the grander and loftier type of mind, this difficulty is the starting-point of all systems of religion and philosophy, of which it is the object to show either that aims exist before men's eyes that are solid realities worth pursuing, and not mere shadows, or else that even shadows are better worth pursuing in some one way than in all others. But not less important nor less interesting are the fragmentary notions which a person of even the most common-place sort grafts for his own special use upon the trunk system which accident or habit has made his nominal creed. Men mostly believe, or think they believe, that there is such a thing as thorough happiness and satisfaction consequent upon a certain course of conduct. Still they are apt, in their inner minds, to let this belief be diluted and weakened by crude doubts whether, after all, happiness is really possible; whether what we call happiness is so wonderfully satisfactory even when to all seeming we are filled with it; whether a good deal of what is held up to us as virtue, and the reward of virtue, is not rather too shadowy and impalpable.

These underlying bits of inconsistent half-belief are constantly found to tinge a man's conduct far more strongly than what seems to be the chief

stratum of beliefs and motives. A deeply cynical conviction or suspicion, which is often but dimly recognised by him who is most habitually acted upon by it, that virtue is only a name, and not a reality, for creatures who eat and drink and to-morrow die, is the root of three-fourths of the selfishness and lack of principle which so astounds us among nominally religious or thinking people. The Preacher's ejaculation that all things come alike to all, that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, is the expression of a great deal of secret and unavowed popular philosophy. It is fortunate for the interests of society that so paralysing a doctrine as this of the utter delusiveness of human happiness and of virtue, and of the connection between the two, is unable to infect more than a minority. It is impossible to prove to the minority that they are wrong. If they choose to think, or rather to feel, that nobody is ever happy, or that a hog is as happy as the most virtuous and intelligent of men, they take up a position from which no amount of argument can expel them. You may argue for ever with a West Indian negro upon the increased happiness which men derive from labour and thrift, and the rest, but you will never get even the thin end of the wedge of conviction into his mind. And, in just the same way, all talk about the comfort and satisfaction that follow on vigorous and

sustained exertion, and self-sacrifice, and abundant interests and likings, falls on incurably deaf ears when a man has once thoroughly imbibed the fatal notion that everything comes to pretty much the same in the long run, whatever you do,

There is no aspect of this many-sided but always benumbing theory more worth considering than the influence which it occasionally exerts on the most valuable sort of men. The theory comprehends the whole philosophy of the cynic. It underlies the conduct of a great many people who get on very well without any philosophy at all, or else whose declared philosophy teaches them something very different indeed. Its power serves to explain, and in their own eyes to vindicate, some of the folly and most of the wickedness which so many cultivated persons are upon occasion ready to exhibit. But, besides all these, men who believe most firmly, and act most sedulously on the belief, that there are a great many things in the world worth pursuing and possessing, and that the more of such things any one seeks the wiser he is—even men who think and act on all this find from time to time their purpose overshadowed, and their strength enervated, by dismal questionings of, What is the use? It has been said that the most successful man, who has got every prize for which he has striven, and has honestly, and not fruitlessly, tried to make the best of himself and

his opportunities, still, by the time he has reached middle age, would not much repine at the prospect of being found quietly dead in his bed any morning. Nobody of solid character—that is, according to Novalis's definition, nobody of "completely fashioned will"—would permit feelings of this kind to lead him gloomily away from the course of conduct which he had deliberately marked out, or to deaden his faith in principles which he had no other reason than this for doubting. But, for all that, such feelings may go some way to damp his energies, and cloud the pleasures which he should have felt in their exercise. There are young men now-a-days who start in their career with the idea firmly implanted in their minds that there is not much to be got out of life; that a man who lives in chambers, belongs to a Pall Mall Club, has a modest competency, and steers clear of domestic ties, and of too many interests, and of everything like enthusiasm on any subject, does on the whole get more happiness than the rest, but that even this, after all, is a sorry sort of stuff. Systematic selfishness of this description may not make the amiable and enlightened being whose gospel it is very uncomfortable, though even in his case the appalling notion ultimately creeps on that the whole thing, with himself at least, has been a mistake. But to men of another stamp the mere suspicion that all the

work that is wrought under the sun is only vanity, is, so long as the shadow hangs over them, a source of real torment. As each effort is crowned with success, they are disposed to put to themselves the cynical problem, how much nearer they are to contentment. Each fresh summit gained only serves to bring new summits within view, and at the same time to fill us with doubt whether they are any better worth scaling than the one we have just conquered. Even the plainest evidence that others have been benefited by our endeavours, pleasurable and consolatory as it may be up to a certain point, fails to counteract the pressure of vague and troublesome despondency. The most benevolent of men may be well pleased with the success of his projects, and yet, paradoxical as it seems, may not feel much more of that profound mental ease which moralists too liberally promise as the reward of well-doing.

The dejection of those who are habitually active in doing the best they can for others and for themselves is very different from the arid and complacent contempt of those who, because the world is full of miseries and disappointments and folly, look with scorn on any attempt to discover principles that may lessen the doleful stock. But the best men and the worst alike are open to the feeling that, when you have done all you can, there is still little to be got but vanity and vexation of spirit. Only with

the one it is a passing mood, with the other a rooted habit that springs from some horribly bad logic and superficial observation in the first place, and then has thriven on the indolent selfishness which the bad logic engendered.

The objects for which men labour and make sacrifices, and which in their healthy moods seem amply worth labouring and making sacrifices for, are obviously as many as the types of human character. A great many people expect that happiness is to be found in making and accumulating money. Balances and investments, stocks and dividends, are the unvarying material out of which they rear their castles in the air, and this kind of aspiration may be observed as much among persons in a moderate way of life as among men in the full tide of big commercial transactions. The one class stake as much on their hundreds as the other one their thousands and tens of thousands. Of course everybody desires money more or less, in whatever direction his tastes may run. But men of this stamp want it for itself, for the sense of power and security which it confers, and for the gratification it brings to their self-esteem. They may feel all this, and still not be avaricious or purse-proud in the vulgar sense. Another set of people have no taste whatever for fine investments and high rates of interest. A modest income which should give them a pleasant house, and a

horse, and a library, and a good garden, and permit them to be hospitable, and to take an occasional trip, as well as to commit an extravagance now and then by the purchase of a picture or an expensive book—an income of this kind is the be-all and end-all of their private dreams. Others, again, fancy that to present a numerous and well-bred family to the State is one of the most useful and creditable things a man can do. The rearing, the education, the prospects of their children, overtop all other interests for them as pre-eminently as does the eagerness to be rich or to be comfortable and to have an opportunity of gratifying all his tastes, in a man of different temper. Then there is the large class, perhaps the most valuable of all, to whom success and happiness do not mean money or comfort, or the power of maintaining a wife and ever so many sons and daughters, but a great reputation in science or politics or art. To have extended his subject by new discoveries, to have written a book or painted a picture of which all men and women should talk, to have gained a wide hearing for a favourite principle, is to him a much more desirable aim achieved than anything else that he can think of. All these are among the objects which the most active and best-educated people in the community propose to themselves, and the energetic pursuit of each of them is an ingredient in the general welfare. Though them-

selves the main ends of a man's exertion, they do not preclude him from taking a reasonable interest in all the other ends which concern his neighbours. If his mind works healthily, and he has anything like a sound theory of life, devotion to his chief pursuit does not incapacitate him from seeing how many other pursuits there are which it is well for men to make their chief aims.

Anybody who has thus with judgment fashioned out some predominant purpose, and at the same time kept all other sympathies and interests moderately accessible from without, has done as much as we mortals ever can to secure happiness of the best kind. Ill health and the loss or misconduct of friends, as has been rightly observed, are two fatal enemies to mental tranquillity, which no possible precautions can always enable us to resist. So long, however, as these two noxious elements are absent, a wise man, who does not expect more from life than the conditions of life can ever suffer it to give, will find within his reach a never-failing stock of adequate pleasures, which make his life very well worth living for.

One reason why even wise men are occasionally attacked by a fit of cynicism is that they have been infected by some sort of philosophy, or by some of the traditions of the race which point to a golden age, past or future, when mortals on earth might enjoy the mysteriously blissful existence of the immortals

on Olympus. It is probably the last lesson which we teach ourselves, and it is one which the mass perhaps never learn at all, that men can never grasp those ideals of happiness which poets and airy philosophers have amused themselves and beguiled others by constructing. People find this world all vanity and vexation of spirit because they have somehow got a notion of a world where everything is to go on by rules of supreme virtue and disinterestedness, where failure and disappointment are unknown—where, in fact, everything is thoroughly unlike the conditions amid which our existence is so unfortunately bound. As an acute Frenchman has said, "Les idées d'un autre monde font à celui-ci plus de tort qu'on ne pense," and this is one of the ways in which such wrong is done.

XXVII.

PRAISE AND BLAME.

THE cant thoughts and sayings which flourish most heartily are, for pretty clear reasons, those which have a bit of truth at the bottom of them. The bit of truth just serves to gain credit for them, and to make thoughtless people forget the nonsense and untruth which have been added. For instance, among large numbers of people of a certain school there is a strong belief in the washy doctrine that a man is only the better for sympathizing, and always the worse for condemning. It is the business of the true soul to be ever on the look-out for what is good, and to keep his eyes peacefully closed upon what he might, if he were so injudicious as to allow himself to think at all, think bad. Mild beings of this stamp carry their principle all through the affairs of life. In

the people whom you meet you are to see either nobleness and goodness, or else nothing at all. In the actions which pass under your eyes you must either find some good, or else you had better feign not to be aware of them. Of the thoughts which circumstances may suggest, you are to ignore all that is negative, and cling vigorously to such only as are positive. In books, only seek what is true and beautiful; leave what is otherwise to itself. Thus, at a recent public dinner, it was made a matter of great praise to a critic that he was not of the narrow, fault-finding sort. It is extraordinary to find men of capacity echoing one of the hollowest cries of modern literary cant. Such a fact only shows how much even a man of independence and vigour may be led by the conventional sayings of his time or his school. It is, in some quarters, the fashion to talk in this way. And here, as in all other examples of successful and thriving cant, there is a sort of truth which serves as a base for the superstratum of what is not true. A man habitually finding fault, habitually on the alert to detect folly or vice, without ever bestowing a thought on whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report, is, as nobody would choose to deny, morally halt and maimed. One half of his faculties, and that the most powerful half, is paralysed and useless. He is like land which produces nothing but thistles and brambles. Of course there

are men of this abnormal kind. But they are not so very many. The world would not go on if they were many. Human nature abhors the vacuum which a mistrust or contempt of one's kind, and an uninterrupted fixing of the attention upon weaknesses and faults, are sure to produce.

This is the sum of the truth which the sympathetic doctrine may be held to contain. So far as it goes, it is a very wholesome and indisputable truth. But we are asked to interpret it in a fashion which implies a benumbing of certain of our faculties that is not a whit less unhealthy than the paralysis of others. The truth that it is not good for a man to pass his days in picking holes and finding faults is distorted into the palpable untruth that censure is in no case a function which men do well to perform. The world is to be filled with choruses of praise and universal laudation. The voice of condemnation is no more to be lifted up. The simple duty of the critic is to find themes for the composition of eulogistic hymns. Ignorance and cant, and all the other pests of society, are to be gently ignored. They are to be left alone, and allowed to die in peace in their own good time. All this sounds very soothing or inspiring, as the case may be, only it is well to remember that the pests of society somehow seem unwilling to die this natural death. There is no instance on record of a social pest

dying of its own accord. They have always had to be strangled, and even then they have a knack of dying amazingly hard. The common metaphor of an error *dying out* rather misleads one. Errors come to an end, but not until ever so many mortal strokes have been delivered. It is paying Humbug and Folly a most unreasonably high compliment to suppose that they are quite willing to retire from the scene the moment that good people cease to look at them. We might suppose that they came spontaneously into the world for the world's advantage, and that now, finding their mission at an end, like good and faithful servants, they will no longer intrude where they are not wanted. The picture is delightful to think of, but it is a sheer castle in the air. The notion that ignorance and cant will take unto themselves wings and quit the earth is a delusion and a fallacy. They will fight every inch of their ground with as much valour as if their cause were the very best in the world. We, meanwhile, are dreaming that we shall vanquish them by the simple process of looking the other way. This is, indeed, the unspeakably glorious age of non-intervention. To interfere with the sacred and vested rights of ignorance and charlatanry is "mere fault-finding." If a vulgar and uneducated man assumes the post of the great religious teacher of his age, and takes upon himself to scoff at knowledge, and learning,

and thought, we are still to sit placidly by and strictly hold our peace. He is raised up to do a work. He reaches the great heart of the people. He means well. Another makes it his business to stir up hatred and malice against a large body of his fellow Christians, and confounds preaching the Gospel with a quackish interpretation of prophecies, supported by masses of sham and tinsel learning. But to expose the sham learning, to confute the quackish interpretations, to insist that Christianity does not mean a never-ending war of sects—all this is merely negative. It does not give any comfort to the mind. It diverts the earnest soul from the contemplation of what is true and noble. A third kind of social nuisance takes to our instruction or amusement by means of writing books. Perhaps he is ignorant of his subject and inaccurate, or he has taken no pains, or he writes windy nonsense. Still there is to be no condemnation. This man, too, means well. Even in the worst book one may find a grain of wheat in the bushel of chaff. In forming an estimate of the book, you are wholly to forget the bushel of chaff, and talk and write of the grain of wheat only. To take any other course is to prove yourself one of the mere fault-finding sort. It is to incur all the penalties due to the cynic. To expose a humbug is to be bitter, and a sneerer and a reviler, and generally a wretched

creature, and it will certainly prevent your health being proposed at a public dinner.

This constant pretext that an author, or a preacher, or a public person of any sort, ought to be sheltered from criticism just because his intentions are good, is really marvellous. Why should a bungler and a blockhead be praised all round for his bungling, simply on the ground that he meant to do his best? If a Minister came down to the House of Commons with a flagrantly bad and stupid measure, it would scarcely be held a valid plea for a neglect on the part of the Opposition to expose its badness, that they thought the proposer a man of the best possible intentions. If a general loses a battle through incompetence and want of nerve, the fact that he fully meant to win the battle does not shield him from pungent criticism, nor excuse his being continued in command. When a doctor is convicted of manslaughter, it is his crass ignorance or stupidity that the law condemns, not any assumed ill-intent. Why should any different principle obtain in other cases? Why should all sorts of evil names be given to a critic who, in the manner of the Parliamentary Opposition, exposes the sins or follies of an author or his book? If an administrator goes carefully into the system of dockyard accounts, for instance, with a view to the discovery of its defects, nobody blames him

for his "fault-finding." Yet we will undertake to say that the accounts of the Royal dockyards are not a more grievous spectacle to a lover of method and correctness than two-thirds of all the books published are to a lover of literature. But the assailant of the bad accounts is a splendid reformer, while the vigorous critic of bad books is only a miserable sneerer and a pitiful cynic.

A principal reason, perhaps, for all this is, that in the case of the incapable minister, or the ignorant doctor, or the bungling commander, the evil results of their misdeeds are patent to all the world. The national finances, for instance, are brought into inextricable confusion. The army is captured or put to the sword. The patient dies. But the mischief done by charlatan teachers, and preachers, and authors, is not tangible. Nobody dies of them, or is even brought into the Bankruptcy Court by them. So the mind is not shocked, as in the other cases. If you are so resolved, you need see nothing whatever but the man's good intentions. It is at our own option whether or not we discern the sour intolerance, the spiritual pride, the ignorant contempt of culture, which one preacher breeds in those who sit at his feet; or the fierce animosities and prejudices that are inflamed by another; or the unctuous nonsense with which a third stifles mental growth in his hearers. And it is the

same with books. The harm that is done indirectly by a perverted history, or by loose and slipshod writing, or by inaccuracies of fact, or by grave transgressions of artistic principle, strikes only the man who thinks. Why should he not protest against the sources of such harm with as much vigour as he can possibly call up? In spite of all the protests that are likely to be made for a long time to come, there is little chance enough of making any perceptible diminution in the quantity of rubbish annually foisted on the world through the booksellers' shops. Meanwhile, one may be pardoned for declining to abandon fault-finding in favour of star-gazing. Praise has its function, but it is not doing the world any good to exalt praise, as such, above blame. So long as there are follies and weaknesses in books, anybody who takes the trouble to hunt them out and expose them is doing a service to the public, and no disservice to an author who has any real desire to treat the world and himself fairly. The only possible reason why a writer can object to honest criticism, however pungent, is, that he prefers the gratification of his own vanity, or the earning of money by unfair means, to all considerations of truth and good workmanship.

And so with regard to conduct. There are plenty of people so imbued with the fallacious cant of which we have been speaking that they

constantly decline to pass any judgment on the transactions going on around them. They mistake this either for a proof of humility, or else for a sign of a pure belief in human goodness and truth, which shrinks from thinking any evil. As a matter of fact, this is neither humility nor charity, nor anything else but a downright shirking of duty. To pass judgment upon occasion is a function for the right discharge of which anybody pretending to be a rational being is as responsible as he is for any other function. Of course, to an indolent, easy-going man, it is much pleasanter to suppose that moral censure is not his business. To be able to decline a duty which bores us, on the ground that it is a breach of charity or of some other law, is a comfortable device enough. People, however, who are not above taking a little trouble about their duties must accept censure along with their other duties. The fools and the rogues have too much of their own way in the world as it is. But what would become of us if nobody had courage or inclination to let them know that they are fools and rogues?

XXVIII.

THE ARTISAN AND HIS FRIENDS.

MOST readers of the daily papers, we suspect, incontinently skip all paragraphs which seem to relate to Working Men's Clubs, Working Men's Institutes, and the like. Such paragraphs, and the stories they contain, are delightful to the professional philanthropist, but to the rest of the world they are as dust to the eyes and vinegar to the teeth. We know very well that the working-man neither has nor wants to have part or lot in them. He does not intend to abandon the bright comfortable room of his tavern, where he can have his pipe and glass and free converse, for a dingy chamber where he cannot get anything more exhilarating than a cup of tea or a glass of cold water, and where his imagination is oppressed by spectral parsons and spectral capitalists morally patting him on the

head and bidding him, like a virtuous artisan as he is, attend church regularly and avoid the Trade Union. This is the kind of thing which no artisan who is not a shameful prig can help detesting with all his heart and soul. He distinctly declines to be made a good and valuable citizen at the price. The frowsy smell of Social Science haunts every room of these so-called clubs; and even the strictly unobjectionable newspaper, and the copy of "Paley's Evidences" edited by the noble President and presented to the club, seem to be tainted with something dreary and dusty and unwholesome. Then of course the virtuous citizen should never play cards. They are too exciting, and are surrounded with all manner of evil associations. Chess and draughts are the only diversions which it is safe for the inflammable artisan to indulge in. True, the philanthropic gentleman who begins the evening by a speech to this effect at a committee-meeting probably winds up by a rubber at his own club. And he would feel rather exasperated if, on reaching his favourite haunt, he found that his own committee had made a rule forbidding the sale of wines and spirits in the club-house, and peremptorily excluding cigars. But of course there is all the difference in the world between the two cases. The patron of the working-man has probably been occupied all day with nothing more exhausting than the invention of fussy philan-

thropic schemes. His nature demands a little fillip. A sonorous speech exhorting the artisan to thrift and industry and self-denial is a capital form of refreshment for a man who is half-dead with idleness. A vigorous denunciation of the public-house makes a man enjoy so much more keenly a club, which is simply a public-house on fashionable and exclusive principles. The sense of calm yet glowing comfort which springs up in a man after beseeching other people to be good, and to work hard, and to deny themselves, must be experienced before it can be understood. It is something altogether peculiar for the gratification which it gives. And exhortations to others to be virtuous make people of a certain turn of mind feel quite as happy, and esteem themselves quite as loftily, as if they had practised the given virtues in their own persons. Then, too, it is so much cheaper a means of securing this very desirable end. Your own virtue must cost something. The virtue of your neighbours, on the other hand, does not cost you a single taste or pleasure.

It is a great comfort to see that at last public men have discovered the folly and impudence of talking to artisans in the ordinary philanthropic strain. Lord Stanley, for instance, does not shrink from exploding sentimental fallacies; and of all sentimental fallacies this, that working-men are a

set of naughty children whom it is the business of people with more money to turn into good children, is one which most urgently needs to be exploded. As he justly says, "artisans are *not* children, and if they, working hard and earning largely, choose to spend their money in the public-house, they have as much right to do it as anybody else has to do a thing which is simply foolish; and it is not for those who live more luxuriously to speak of them harshly in the matter;" nor, he might have added, to speak to them with ostentatious lamentations and airs of patronage. Then there is the old piece of cant, that the working-man ought to stop at home with his wife and children; as if men in the richer classes, "having a great deal more time at their disposal, and having materials for making far more comfortable homes, made it a universal rule to pass their evenings with their wives and children." And as if, too, a man who works for five-and-thirty shillings a week were not like a man who works for a couple of thousands a year, in this respect at least, that he is sure to dwindle down to a very poor creature indeed if he never has a chance of enjoying cheerful and convivial intercourse with his fellows. What a respectable and sober artisan wants is, in plain English, the public-house without its drunkenness. He wants the brightness and briskness of the public-house, and its air of life and joviality, but without the

drunkenness and blackguardism which cannot be excluded from it. In Lord Stanley's words, the working-men want real clubs, "not schools in disguise; not institutes, though institutes are very good things in their way; not lecture-rooms, but places where talk and newspapers and refreshment may be had, with a security against disturbance from drunken and rough or disorderly persons." And Lord Stanley would do well to go a step further. The less "gentlemen"—that is, men who work for two pounds a day or more, instead of for two pounds a week—have to do with such clubs, the more they are likely to be real clubs.

In some senses, class distinctions, and the mutual isolation of rich and poor, are beyond all things mischievous and hateful. But there is a sense in which the distinction of rich and poor is very natural, and in which it is very stupid not to recognise it. Of course, before the law, a man with two pounds a week ought to stand on precisely the same level as the man with as much a day. But it is preposterous to say that the two sets of men ought to share the same pleasures, and enjoy the same kinds of relaxation. Different classes take their pleasure in different ways. A young barrister of no family and with a small income does not curse class distinctions because he knows he has not the least chance of getting into Brookes's or the Travellers'. He knows very well

that, if he were there, he would be among men whose whole way of looking at things is radically different from his own, and to whom the great question of earning and spending have never presented themselves in the light in which he has always seen them. The young professional man, if he is a person of sense, does not care to be compelled to consort in his leisure hours with noblemen and colonels and bishops. Why should the artisan be invited to join a club which his employer and his employer's sons, and the parson of the parish are good enough to patronize?

The public have heard of an institution which its founders seem to think a model for a working-men's club. Its accommodation is all that could be wished. The members may smoke, play cards, have wine, spirits, and beer, and carry on "free discussion of religion," any day of the week except Sunday, when the house is closed. Of course it would be unspeakably infamous to smoke or discuss religion on Sundays. But it is rather startling to find that the principle on which the committee elect members is, "to exclude no man who can, in the broadest sense of the term, be considered a gentleman." This is, indeed, the kind of talk which is peculiarly likely to allure working-men to a club. The artisan hates nothing so bitterly as to hear people call him "one of God Almighty's gentlemen," or to hear a man of good income and wearing fine clothes say,

"I, too, am a working-man." It may be quite true that the man in fine clothes works a great deal harder than the man in fustian, and that the man in fustian has a kind heart and an upright disposition, which is all that is meant by the title of "God Almighty's gentleman." But the artisan knows that his patron is not a working-man in his sense, and that he himself is not a gentleman in his patron's sense. It is mere philanthropic cajolery to talk to working-men about their being gentlemen in "a broad sense" of the term. Then we are told that among the members are workingmen, as well as "doctors, attorneys, manufacturers, tradesmen, and others; perfect social equality being observed in the club-house; and the committee would feel as much pleasure in balloting for a respectable, intelligent working man, as they would in electing the Mayor himself." We do not see that the committee need take any tremendous credit to themselves for this amazing philosophy. Suppose, however, the committee of a London club were to assure young doctors or young lawyers that they would have quite as much pleasure in electing them as in electing lords or bishops, and that, if the young lawyer were elected, he might rely upon getting the same wine and dishes as the bishop, and upon being allowed to sit at the same table, and upon not being snubbed and flouted by

him. Does anybody in his senses imagine that a single doctor or lawyer would avail himself of the offer set forth in this ostentatious spirit? And can we suppose that working-men value at a pin's fee the privilege of mixing in convivial hours with people who have a great deal more money than themselves, and whose feelings and habits they are not in any position to share? The artisan sees through all this moonshine about the broad sense of gentlemen, and social equality, and the rest of it, as clearly as anybody does. He likes to enjoy himself, but in his own way, and among his equals. Like a wise man, he positively won't be raised and improved and elevated. The best class of artisans work hard, and enjoy their pipe and a glass at night, and talk politics and religion in a rough but rather sentimental way, and don't let a chance of getting on in the world go by. Any "raising" they know they must do for themselves, and they don't want to be gentlemen in a broad sense, or to associate with gentlemen in an uncommonly narrow sense. To people with a fastidious susceptibility for what is delicate and beautiful, it is perhaps shocking to think of a lot of men drinking questionable ale and smoking coarse tobacco, and talking a good deal of nonsense in a rough dialect. But then, to another set of people, it seems an uncommonly poor thing to pass one's days in ease,

thinking principally of wines aud dinners, and talking a good deal of nonsense in an easy and polished dialect.

Anyhow, the only sensible thing which kind people, with money in their pockets to spare, can do to help the working-man to a nicer form of pleasure than any which he can secure now, is to advance money to help the artisans to build a house where a club can meet without being disturbed by drunken and disorderly intruders. And then, when the house is built, they can withdraw themselves utterly and for ever away from the concern, and leave the artisans to manage their own affairs. Even without the oppression of too kind patrons, the clubs will have plenty of difficulties to encounter. Officialism, for instance, committees, councils, and the like, are often sadly explosive elements. Then fanatical teetotallers, and Sabbatarians, and bitter-minded religionists or non-religionists among the working-classes themselves, are always on the alert to spoil every association of this sort. Such people too often get their way, because they are backed by some of the patrons whose subscriptions override the public opinion of the members. But there is such a thing as public opinion among the working-classes, though it is very often of an extremely objectionable kind. The important point about the proposed clubs, and every other scheme of a similar sort, is to give this

public opinion free play, by forbearing to pester those who have to form it and work it by patronage and eloquent talk from those who cannot help looking on a working-man as a fallen gentleman who wants raising.

XXIX.

THE TERRORS OF INTELLECT.

THE painful position of a man who detests and dreads intellectual inquiry in an age of active speculation upon all possible subjects is scarcely recognised so sympathetically as it ought to be. It is all very well to talk about the increase of knowledge, and the development of sound methods, and the growth of searching critical principles, but those perverse and conceited persons who are for ever subjecting everything under the sun to rational tests are shamefully inconsiderate of the sufferings which this perpetual seeking after new knowledge inflicts upon a large and highly meritorious class. There is a downright inhumanity in such conduct. No man with a spark of kindness in his heart would think of frightening his little children out of their

wits by means of sham ghosts and horrible stories. It is now admitted to be a piece of scandalous cruelty to dress up the broomstick with a sheet, or to write with phosphorus on the wall of a dark room. The most fatal results have constantly followed these mischievous and senseless tricks. Surely it is quite as unfeeling and as mischievous, by corresponding devices, to alarm excellent country clergymen and their admirable wives, and honest country squires, and all other sorts of simple souls. Who can measure the wretchedness which these theological ghosts and terrifying illuminations carry into parsonages and manor-houses where fifty years ago all was confidence and peace? If it is a cruel thing to draw a phosphorus skeleton upon the wall of a child's room, why is it any less cruel to write a book about the Pentateuch or the Origin of Species, and then publish it, to the infinite perturbation of honest divines whose parishioners do not happen to be Zulus? It is true that, if the child were only a little older and knew a little about the luminous properties of phosphorus, the skeleton would lose all its terrors. And in the same way, if these unfortunate beings had their minds rather more fully developed, and could discern the real properties of thought and inquiry, they would be rapidly released from their hot and angry misery. As it is, the phosphorescent demon of Intellect, with its flaming eyes and out-

stretched claws and complacent fiery grin, makes their very lives a burden to them. The monster is constantly assuming new and more hideous shapes. At one moment we are told that possibly Moses did not write the book of Genesis, and that some of the figures in Exodus and Leviticus are rather puzzling. With what pleasure can one recite to a faithful congregation of farmers and squires and hinds the chapters about the construction of the tabernacle with its "fifty taches of brass," and "two tenons in one board," and the "knops of the four bowls of the candlestick," when we know that a copy of Dr. Colenso's book is locked up in a drawer of the study-table at home? What becomes of the grand solemnity of the genealogies which in happier days brought such comfort alike to the occupants of the rectory pew and of the free sittings? What solace remains in "that blessed word Mesopotamia," or in Jehoshaphat, or Maher-shalalhashbaz?

Then the demon quits theology, and changes the guise of a colonial bishop for that of a naturalist. We are asked to believe that men and women are the creatures of natural selection. Granting a modest doubt as to the exact number of people who have the faintest notion either what a species means or what the process of natural selection means, where can we find language strong enough to characterize so venomous a

doctrine? It is impossible to foretell the shock which would affect the moral constitution of the patient Hodge or bovine Giles if he were once infected with the suspicion that he is a distant connection of the ox which he tends or the turnip which he digs up. What is the use of giving him ten shillings and a pair of breeches for virtue, if he knows all the time that he is only a very highly improved kind of lower animal? There really would be no answering for the consequences upon the morality and devoutness of our rural poor if they once got wind of the doctrine of natural selection. The very safest churchwarden might have his faith in church-rates shaken to its lowest foundations by this revolutionary theory, and the boys in the Sunday-school might cease to pull their forelocks to a rector whose ancestors had had prehensile tails. It really is too bad. People were just beginning to feel pretty comfortable about geology. Religious belief and the practice of virtue have survived the discoveries of strata and the explosion of Archbishop Usher's chronology. Strata are no sooner got over than a new and worse tribulation is brought by tails. Men paid their church-rates and heard sermons just as willingly when they found the globe was uncounted millions of years old, as when they thought it had been made precisely 4004 B.C. But of course it would be absurdly sanguine to hope that men and

women will find religion as needful, as inspiring, and as comforting, if they once think that the differences of species had their origin in a process of selection.

It is important to remember how much excuse there is for the terror with which timid folk regard this deadly plague of Intellect. When a man gets considerably past middle age, and has lived all his life among a little narrow circle of people, and read only a handful of books all of the same stamp, and a single newspaper which is also of the same stamp, he is not likely to relish any sort of speculation which travels out of the old grooves. New ideas are to him what a French treaty is to an old Coventry weaver. The treaty is of the greatest service to mankind generally, but to the old weaver it means the disruption of inveterate habits, the breaking up of his home, the dispersion of his family—in short, it means ruin and misery. And to the worthy parson who was presented with his living thirty or forty years ago, and who has passed all that time in the company of his own family and a few dull neighbours, new ideas mean misery too. He has discharged his routine duties faithfully. He has preached the best sermons he could either compose or copy. He has taken care to keep any interesting or improper book out of the book-club. Punctuality at funerals, kindliness to all his parishioners, reverence for the archdeacon,

and a dignified sense of his own importance, make up the catalogue of his virtues. The whole atmosphere thickens the intellectual cuticle, and he ceases to be sensible of argument, if indeed he ever had any sensibility. It is impossible to blame a man of this sort for his dogged dislike of intellectual activity, any more than we can blame a little child for being afraid of ghosts. Belief in Radical and Atheistic and Scientific spectres, which to men who live in daylight are not visible at all, with him is a condition of existence. It is natural to his age and position. One is certainly bitterly annoyed to see the excellent man journey up to Oxford, and there do his best to prevent a professor from being paid for his professorial work, and it is a little vexatious to think that he and his fellows are powerful enough to bring a reproach on the more educated part of the University who do not deserve the reproach. But we get over the vexation. They cannot help it. Everything that educated men value most these people set down to the spirit of the age, or intellect, or whatever else they call their bugbear, and they preach against it, and vote against it, and abhor it accordingly. They see what intellect brings a man to. It destroys all his peace of mind and comfort about the quantity of taches and tenons and shittim wood in the tabernacle; it makes him believe in the ancestral tail; it draws the charm

and solace out of Mesopotamia. Can we wonder, then, that those who think all this should hate an agency which thus blights man's present and so narrowly endangers his future, and that, whenever they catch a glimpse of anything like an intellect actively and honestly at work, they should set their faces sternly and dead against it? Nay, rather let us respectfully sympathise with these much-tried souls, and admire the energetic and simple fervour of the man who exclaimed, "Well, I thank God I always have voted against that d——d intellect, and I always shall."

But besides underrating the terrors of intellect we do not make sufficient allowance for the pleasures of intolerance. The people in whom nature or education has implanted an easy and tolerant temper scarcely know of how much and what peculiarly intense delight they are depriving themselves. They hear hostile opinions and witness conduct of which they do not wholly approve without any burning desire to pervert or convert the offender. They can endure without impatience any amount of difference of sentiment on the part of those around them as to all imaginable subjects. They will not believe that truth can never have any other aspect than that which is presented to themselves, and is never to be found out of the track in which they are content to seek their own portion of it. There is a poor

sort of comfort in such a state of mind, it must be confessed. It makes the world go somewhat easier with us. Philosophy has taught that truth can only come out of the conflict of antagonistic opinions. Religion, too, enjoins upon us the practice of charity as the chief of virtues. And it is rather soothing to find oneself living in harmony with the conclusions of philosophy, and in obedience to the precepts of religion. But what are these lesser delights compared to the fiery joys of intolerance and persecution? An ox browsing in a meadow is comfortable enough, but the pleasures of his life are unpleasantly tame and mean when compared with the fierce energetic delights of a panther or a hyæna. The sweets of brotherly-love are all very well in their way, but they are unendurably insipid to those who have accustomed their palates to the sweets of hatred and malice and all uncharitableness. The pleasure of forgiving an enemy may satisfy a mild and lukewarm nature. The pleasure of hunting him down, and reviling him, and calumniating his name is much more gratifying to men and women of spirit. No conviction is worth the name unless it is strong enough to make a man go through fire and water to punish all who do not share it with him. To take as much trouble as possible to form your own opinion aright, and then to leave others alone to go through the same process on their own account

is pitiful work indeed. There is no excitement in this, no room for that animosity and spitefulness and bad language which render the profession of the intolerant partisan so genuinely delightful. Let not liberal and enlightened people suppose for a moment that all the peace of mind is on their side.

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